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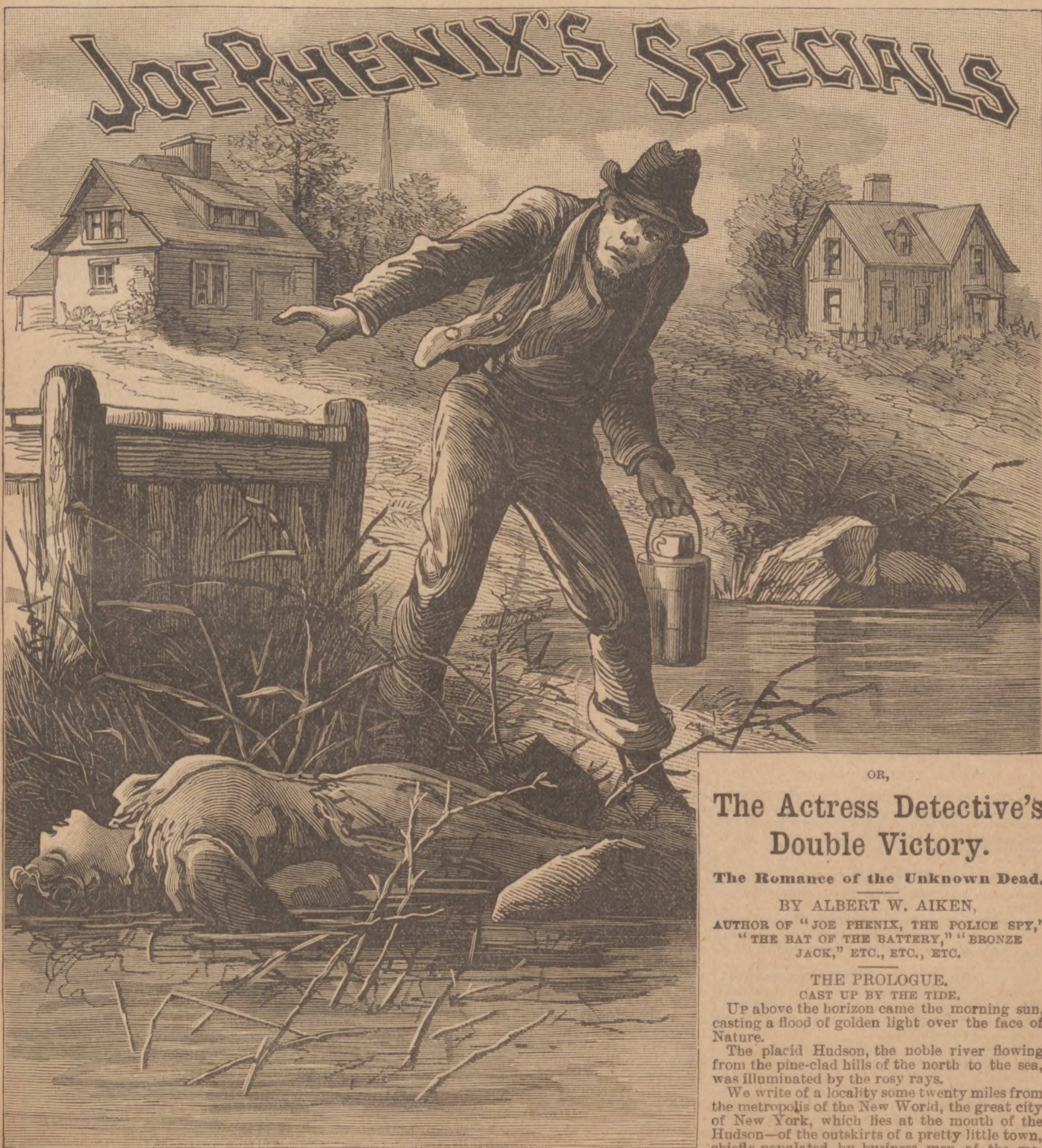
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OR,

The Actress Detective's Double Victory.

The Romance of the Unknown Dead.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "JOE PHENIX, THE POLICE SPY,"
"THE BAT OF THE BATTERY," "BRONZE
JACK," ETC., ETC., ETC.

THE PROLOGUE.

CAST UP BY THE TIDE.

UP above the horizon came the morning sun,
casting a flood of golden light over the face of
Nature.

The placid Hudson, the noble river flowing
from the pine-clad hills of the north to the sea,
was illuminated by the rosy rays.

We write of a locality some twenty miles from
the metropolis of the New World, the great city
of New York, which lies at the mouth of the
Hudson—of the outskirts of a pretty little town,
chiefly populated by business men of the me-
tropolis.

"BE HEAVEN! THERE HAS BEEN MURDER HERE!" THE WORKMAN CRIED.

Standing upon the railway track, the sight-seer commands a view of as fair a water scene as the noble river can boast.

So glorious was the prospect on this morning of which we speak, that even a poor, illiterate, old-fashioned Irishman, trudging along to his work, with a dinner-pail in his hand, was forced to come to a halt for a moment in order to enjoy the beauty of the view, although it was no new thing to him, for he passed that way twice a day.

"Bedad! it is well worth looking at!" he exclaimed, as he gazed out over the surface of the shining water.

Then his eyes ran along the shore, and at a point about an eighth of a mile off his gaze was attracted by an object which lay upon some rocks at the water's edge.

It was dead low tide, and the rocks, now bare, were covered by the water when the tide was high.

"Tare and cunds!" he cried, "what is dat? It is a woman I don't know!"

Then he hurried at the top of his speed to the spot.

The old man was right in his conjecture.

It was a woman—or rather the body of one who had once been a woman, as Shakespeare's wise and witty grave-digger remarks, for the life had fled.

She was both young and good-looking, well-dressed, and bore every mark of being a lady.

That she had been a victim of the waves was evident, for her hat was gone, and her long brown hair was streaming freely.

The body was on the rocks, but the head drooped, resting upon the sand.

There was no evidence of anguish in the face—no sign that the parting of the body with its soul had been attended with any physical pain, for the features wore a peaceful expression, and she looked more like a sleeping girl than a dead one.

She had evidently been drowned, and the body, floating upon the surface of the water, had been carried by the tide upon the rocks and there left when the stream turned and the hurrying waters went backward to the sea.

But the Irishman was one of the men who are always disposed to look for evil, and as he came rushing up he noticed that the side of the dead girl's face was slightly bruised.

This could be easily accounted for under the supposition that the waves had forced the body against the sea-weed-adorned rocks, and their jagged edges had done the damage.

But the old man never thought of this, immediately jumping to the conclusion that there had been foul play.

"Be Heaven! there has been murder here!" the workman cried as he came up to where the body lay.

"What will I do—what will I do?" the Irishman exclaimed, looking vacantly around, and scratching his head as though that process would aid his thinking powers.

And then there came another man along, a fellow workman of the first.

The Irishman hailed him, calling attention to the body.

"Don't you touch it!" cried the second fellow, who fancied he knew all about what was the law in such a matter; "the coroner has got to be told, and I will go for him right away!"

"And what'll I do?" asked the Irishman, perplexed.

"Do nothing at all, except for to stay here and see that nobody teches the body 'til the coroner comes," the other replied; "and if any fool wants to play smart, and goes in for to touch her, jest you warn him that he will find himself in jail if he does!"

Then the man hurried away, leaving the old Irishman to watch the body, a task which he did not enjoy.

CHAPTER I.

THE DETECTIVE'S DREAMS.

A TALL, broad-shouldered man, very muscularly built, and with a lion-like face, came down the steps of the Grand Central Depot in New York's great metropolis just as the clocks were marking the hour of six, on a pleasant May evening.

This was the great detective, Joe Phenix, whose remarkable adventures we have chronicled so faithfully.

He had been on a business trip to Chicago and now on his return was greeted by his right-hand man, Tony Western, who had been waiting his arrival.

The two shook hands cordially, for the great detective had a high opinion of his assistant, while Tony Western thought that his chief was fully a head and shoulders above any man whom he had ever encountered.

After the customary salutations were exchanged the detective inquired concerning business.

"Nothing in particular on hand just now," Western replied. "Things are quiet, but now that you have got back, ready to attend to business, I don't doubt that you will soon have your hands full. That is the way it generally goes."

Just then a newsboy came howling by.

"Ere's yer hextra—full account of the awful

Tarrytown mystery!" the boy cried at the top of his lungs.

"Hello! what's that?" Joe Phenix asked.

"The last sensation of the hour," Western answered.

"Early this morning some laborers going to their work, passing by the river's bank, at Tarrytown, twenty miles or so up the Hudson, discovered the body of a young and beautiful girl. She was nicely dressed, but there wasn't anything upon her person to indicate who she was, and there is considerable doubt as to whether she was the victim of foul play or had jumped into the river and committed suicide."

"A stranger to the neighborhood?"

"Yes, apparently so, for up to the time of sending the newspaper accounts the body had not been identified; in fact, no one has come forward who ever saw the girl before."

"A mysterious case."

"Very much so, and as far as the accounts go it seems to me to be pretty conclusive that the girl did not take her own life, but was murdered."

"Let us walk toward the house, and we can converse as we go along."

Joe Phenix had a house on one of the cross streets on the east side of the metropolis, about a mile from the Grand Central Depot.

"Tony, do you dream much?" the great detective asked, abruptly.

"No, I can't say that I do; I am seldom troubled by anything of the kind."

"My own case, but for the last three nights my slumbers have been disturbed for some reason, and I have dreamed the dream same three times in succession."

"If you were inclined to be superstitious now you would think you ought to pay some heed to this vision."

"The dreams were morning ones, too, and morning dreams come true—so the saying goes."

"Yes, I know it, but a good many people say a good many things besides their prayers," Western remarked, evidently incredulous.

"This dream, three times repeated, was a very strange one, and coupled with the fact that immediately upon my arrival in New York I hear the account of a girl being found dead in the water renders it doubly odd."

"Ah, your dream had something to do with a girl and the water then?"

"Yes, and it was this way: I seemed to wake abruptly from a profound slumber," the detective explained. "I was perfectly conscious, you know, even in my sleep, that I did not wake, but I appeared to."

"Before me all was dark—not the blackness of the night, but as if a heavy mist obscured the view; gradually the mist rolled away and a large body of dark, troubled water appeared."

"On the surface floated a girl's head; there was no body attached to the head, as far as I could see, and yet there did not appear to be anything strange, or unnatural, in the head floating around on the waves minus a body."

"In dreams everything goes, as the sports say."

"The face seemed to be one which was perfectly familiar to me, the face of a girl whom I had known and liked, and yet I could not recognize it so as to be able to call the owner by name."

"Yes, I understand; in dreams, mixed up things of that sort are very common."

"From the expression upon the face it seemed as if the owner was distressed, and I said to the head—just as if it was the most natural thing in the world, you know, to talk to a head traveling around without a body—'What is the matter?'"

"Then the lips unclosed and made reply, 'I am in great trouble—I need your aid, and you must come and help me as soon as you can.'"

"An urgent message."

"And then I suddenly awoke to find myself bathed in a cold perspiration, and feeling decidedly troubled, too."

"It is very odd that even a strange dream of this sort should make an impression on such a man as you are," the assistant remarked, with a shake of the head.

"I regard it as really remarkable, particularly as I have had the same dream three nights in succession, and the vision has not varied a particle in any respect."

"Some very learned and extremely great men have paid a deal of attention to dreams, believing that warnings are sometimes conveyed in that way."

"Mankind have always been searching after the unknown ever since the dark ages, but although the world has made a deal of progress in almost every direction during the last two hundred years, yet when it comes to dreams, and things of that nature, we do not know any more about them than the ancient Greeks and Romans."

"In fact, we don't know half as much; or to speak correctly, we don't believe half as much as the ancient sages."

"Now, the strange points about this dream are that while the face seemed to be perfectly familiar to me, yet I could not tell whose it was, and that it should make so deep an impression upon me."

"And what a strange coincidence, too, that

just as soon as you arrived in New York, the story of a girl found mysteriously drowned should be brought to your notice."

"Yes; Tony, I am not a superstitious man, but I am going to take an early train to Tarrytown in the morning and look into this matter," Joe Phenix declared.

"Under the circumstances I certainly would if I were you," Western responded.

"And as there is no business pressing, you had better come with me."

Western said he would be glad to make the trip, and then the conversation turned to other matters.

Joe Phenix was a man who seldom changed his mind when he had once made it up, without good cause, and so the next morning an early train bore the great detective and his assistant northward.

They had all the leading morning journals, and read the different reports of the mystery carefully during their trip.

There was an ounce of fact to a pound of fiction in all the accounts.

Each reporter having already told all that there was to be said about the affair, gave reins to his imagination, and related how the girl *might* have come to her death.

According to the examination which had been made the girl had come to her death by drowning.

There were some slight bruises on the body, but these might have been caused by contact with the rocks on which the body was found, or if the girl had been murdered, and afterward flung into the water, the marks might be from the violence used by the murderers.

The dead woman was evidently a lady, for her hands showed no marks of toil, and her undergarments were all of the finest linen and trimmed with costly lace.

And that she was a stranger to the neighborhood too, was amply proven, for almost everybody for miles around had inspected the body, and none of them recognized the girl.

"About as mysterious a case as I ever have encountered," Joe Phenix remarked, after the newspapers had been read.

"Yes, and opinions seemed to be evenly divided as to whether the girl committed suicide, or was murdered."

"I do not take much stock in the suicide theory," Joe Phenix remarked, reflectively.

"If the girl was a stranger to Tarrytown, and its neighborhood, as she appears to have been, I do not see any reason why she should have selected that particular point to 'shuffle off the mortal coil.'"

"My experience is, that when a man or woman wants to commit suicide they generally make a bee-line for the nearest water, and they do not usually trouble themselves to go a long distance from where they have been in the habit of living."

Western reflected over the matter for a few moments and then remarked that he believed his chief's reasoning to be correct.

"Another strange thing about this matter too is that the girl did not possess a pocketbook nor a single article of jewelry, not even a pair of earrings, or a simple finger ring," the detective observed.

"And a woman dressed as well as she was ought to have worn some jewelry."

"Yes, and she certainly would have had a little money. She didn't come into Tarrytown like a bird, by the way of the air, and as no one saw her on any of the roads leading to the river, the inference is plain that she must have come by train; probably arrived after dark, when she would not be apt to be noticed, and it does not seem likely that the woman only had just money enough to pay her way to the town."

"Here we are!" Western exclaimed at this moment, the train drawing up at the Tarrytown station.

The two got out, and from a talkative villager learned that the body was at the undertaker's shop, to which he offered to conduct them.

CHAPTER II.

IDENTIFIED.

As it happened the man was a distant connection of the undertaker, also a relative of the coroner, who had charge of the case, and so was brimming over with information.

That is, he declared he was, for he took pains to impress upon his hearers that on account of his relationship to the two functionaries he was better informed in regard to the mystery than anybody else in the town.

Joe Phenix, in his polite way, expressed his delight at being lucky enough to make his acquaintance, and the gossip, being thus led on, hastened to tell all he knew, but his story was merely a rehash of what had been printed in the newspaper.

"It does just beat all how many people have missed relatives or friends who answered to the description of this girl!" the man declared.

"A great many have come to examine the body, eh?" the detective asked.

"Nigh onto three hundred, I reckon, and Jim

Jones, who is a cousin of mine, and about the smartest feller in the town, said the undertaker made a big mistake in not charging the folks a quarter a head for permission to look at the body," and then the man indulged in a hearty laugh, just as though he considered he had said something remarkably witty.

"I am afraid that the law would object to any little game of the kind," Joe Phenix remarked, dryly.

"Oh, that was only a joke of Jim's, of course," the rustic explained.

"I s'pose you have missed somebody 'bout the size of this gaff?" the man continued.

"Well, not I, exactly, but a friend of mine," the detective replied.

By this time the three had reached the undertaker's store, and the villager introduced them to the man in charge, by saying:

"Tom, here's a couple of gents who have come all the way from York to git a look at the body. They think, mebbe, that it is a relative of a friend of this 'ere gen'lman," and the man nodded to Phenix.

The pair were conducted into a back room, where the body was exposed to view on a long table.

The corpse was that of a woman a little above the medium size, stockily built, yet extremely well formed, and she had such a natural expression that she seemed more like one buried in a sound sleep than a mortal who had passed to that "bourne from whence no traveler returns."

She could not be called beautiful, for her features were a little irregular, and rather strongly marked, but she had a sweet expression, and in life would undoubtedly have been an engaging and attractive woman.

Both hair and eyes were dark brown, her complexion remarkably clear, and all about her indicated that she was a lady, born and bred.

There were a half-dozen loungers who had followed the New Yorkers into the back room, and stared with eager curiosity at them as they surveyed the body, anxious to see if they could identify the dead woman.

But neither of the two were men who in their faces betrayed their thoughts.

The detectives gazed at the body for a few moments, and then Joe Phenix shook his head and turned away.

"You are not acquainted with the woman?" the man in charge asked.

"She is not the one I expected to see," Joe Phenix replied, and then with a courtly "much obliged!" departed with his companion.

"The girl has a strongly-marked face," Tony Western remarked, after they got out of ear-shot of the knot of men loafing in front of the shop.

"Yes, any one who had ever met her would be apt to remember her if again encountered.

"Poor girl! I little expected that she would die a death of this kind."

"Ah! you knew her, then?" Western asked, not astonished at the revelation, for he had been long enough with the great detective to understand that he was not one to speak heedlessly in the midst of a crowd.

"Yes; and now, Tony, I am going to tell you something which is extremely strange—something which I fancy is beyond the wit of mortal to explain, except by saying, strange coincidence."

"The face of this dead woman is the face which has appeared to me in my dreams for three nights in succession.

"The lips, now so cold and motionless, are the ones which implored me to come to her aid."

"Upon my word I must declare that this is about the strangest case I ever heard of in all my experience, and I have seen a deal of the world, too!" Tony Western declared.

"It is a remarkable case; a coincidence, of course, that is the only reasonable explanation," the detective observed, thoughtfully.

"But superstitious men wouldn't have it that way at all, you know."

"Yes, I am well aware of that," Phenix replied. "And good, sober, sensible, strong-minded men who could not justly be termed superstitious, would be apt to think there was more in the matter than mere coincidence."

"It is human nature to delight in the marvelous, you know, and ever since the world began, when men have been puzzled by any mystery, which it was difficult to account for on rational grounds, they immediately turned to the supernatural."

"Now, in this case, a man who was at all inclined to believe that beings of another world have the power to interfere with matters on this planet, would certainly jump to the conclusion that some good angel, understanding that danger threatened the poor girl, took pains to have a warning conveyed to me by means of a dream."

"Yes, but the way the thing has been worked is a good deal like locking the stable door after the horse has been stolen," Tony Western remarked in his hard-headed practical way.

"That is true, but a believer in that sort of thing would explain to you that it is not possible even for a friendly and well-disposed spirit to

upset the natural order of things," Joe Phenix remarked with one of his peculiar, cold smiles.

"It was the girl's fate to die—her life line was marked out and she was obliged to tread it to the end, so even the best disposed spirit could not alter the decrees of fate."

"Yes, I see! Well, that is certainly an ingenious way of getting around the difficulty," Western remarked in so incredulous a manner that if any confirmed spiritualist had overheard the remark it certainly would have aroused his anger immediately.

"You understand—the friendly spirit was placed in an extremely delicate position," Joe Phenix remarked, sarcastically.

"He comprehended that mortal danger threatened the girl, and yet the rules of the celestial community, to which he belonged, did not allow him to take any measure to save the girl from the danger that threatened."

"Yes, but hold on a moment!" Tony Western interrupted. "Is it not true that these people who believe in that sort of thing have declared, time and time again, that spirit warnings have been given to a favored few so that coming dangers have been warded off?"

"Quite correct, yet if you ask a believer why friendly spirits do not interfere to save mortals in whom they take an interest from dangers which they know threaten, they will make the statement, which I did a moment ago, that even angels are not allowed to alter the decrees of fate."

"It seems to me there is a little discrepancy in this thing," the practical detective remarked.

"Oh, yes, there is no doubt of it; and none of the believers with whom I have come in contact were able to explain the matter to my satisfaction."

"Why a spirit can do in one case what he cannot do in another, is a riddle which has never yet been solved."

"The people who believe in anything of the kind must be a set of dumb-heads!" Western declared.

"Yes, and so far as my experience goes, the most of the leaders are tricksters who thrive on the credulity of their dupes."

"But to return to our subject: The good angel, not being able to save the girl from the violent death to which she was doomed, did the next best thing."

"By means of visions, it warned me of the tragedy, and so contrived to bring me to the scene in order that I might avenge the girl's death."

"A very roundabout way of doing business," Western commented.

"Probably an old-fashioned spirit, not up to the quick, modern way of working the oracle," Joe Phenix replied, with a smile.

"If a supernatural view of the matter is taken, the explanation I have given is a reasonable one, but as a plain, matter-of-fact man, who does not take any stock in this spiritualism business, I say that it is simply a strange coincidence, and let it go at that."

"That is only common sense."

"But I don't dispute that it was the will of the Supreme Power, who governs us human puppets, which brought me here, and I take it as an indication that I am designed to investigate the mystery which surrounds the unfortunate girl's death, and if she has been murdered—which at present I am inclined to believe—to bring the doer of the deed to justice."

"Yes, I agree with you there!" Tony Western declared.

"I am fully satisfied there is a power which directs our steps, despite our wishes," the detective remarked in a positive way.

"Yes, and it is not chance, but destiny, which has brought me to this spot, and I gladly accept the task which I am confident fate has assigned to me."

"It really does look as if a special Providence had selected you to look after this job," the other observed, thoughtfully.

"So it seems to me, and you can depend upon my using my best endeavors to unravel the mystery!" Joe Phenix declared.

"Although I recognized the girl the moment my eyes fell upon her face, yet I did not deem it wise to allow the gaping bystanders to perceive that such was the case."

"There are plenty of people in New York to identify the girl, for she was well known, and it's a wonder to me that some one has not recognized her before now."

"The right ones hav'n't come along, I presume."

"That is the explanation, probably. I have known her for three or four years; she was an actress, and bore the name of Mignon Lawrence, but whether that was her real name or not I have no means of knowing, for it is a very common thing for people when they adopt a stage life to assume false appellations before making their appearance behind the footlights."

"Yes, that is true. As far as my experience goes two-thirds of the stage people don't use their own names."

"This girl was really something out of the common, and that was the reason, I suppose, why I took a fancy to her," the great detective observed in a reflective way.

"I made her acquaintance in an odd fashion. I had taken up my quarters, disguised, in an up-town house, chiefly occupied by stage people, for the purpose of watching a foreign count, so-called, whom I suspected to be a swindling adventurer."

"He turned out not only to be that, but a thief and a housebreaker as well."

"This girl, with a chum, had a room in the house. The 'count' took advantage of the absence of the occupants one day to 'go through' the apartment, but as he was retreating with his spoils the girls returned suddenly and caught him."

"He showed fight, thinking he only had a couple of weak women to deal with, but as it happened Miss Lawrence was an experienced boxer—a sort of a man-woman, although you would never think so to look at her sweet and gentle face," Joe Phenix remarked, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"No, assuredly I would not."

"It is the truth; she was remarkably muscular and built more like a man than a woman, and when it came to the manly art of self-defense, she had such a natural talent in that line—and she had also been instructed too by an actor friend who had once won the amateur middle-weight championship of England—that she could hold her own against almost any regular professional boxer of her weight."

"I have heard of just such women, although I never happened to meet one; still I know they exist, although rare birds."

"It only took her a few moments to knock the count out, and she did it in the most complete manner, much to his astonishment, for I greatly doubt if he had ever been handled so roughly before in his life; then I appeared on the scene and snapped the bracelets on the man."

"The next time I encountered her I was in search of a secret agent to do a certain piece of work, and I went up-town to the theatrical quarter with her in my mind."

"Fortune favored me so far that I met her on the street, and she was in an extremely bad way."

"She had been foolish enough to marry a good-looking young Englishman, who boasted, as his class usually do, of what a great man he was at home, and how much money he would have one these days."

"All lies, of course!"

"Yes, he spent nearly all the girl's savings, and then quarreled with her because she wished to retain a little; they had hot words, and he undertook to beat her."

"And I have no doubt that the female boxer astonished him," Tony Western observed with a chuckle.

"She did by giving him a sound thrashing. Then he ate humble-pie, like the cur that he was, and promised to behave himself, but on the first opportunity he robbed the girl of all she possessed, and fled with a professional rival of his wife's, whom he announced his intention of marrying after he got a divorce."

"The confounded scamp!"

"And when I met her she was on her way to an opium joint with the idea of committing suicide."

CHAPTER III.

THE ACTORS.

"SHE was going about it in a leisurely way," Tony Western remarked with a laugh.

"Yes, and the probabilities are, that after she had 'hit the pipe' a few times she would have changed her mind."

"But be that as it may, after she went with me, and enjoyed a good dinner, washed down by a bottle of excellent wine, she came to the conclusion that life was worth living after all."

"She accepted my offer to become one of my secret agents, and I never had a single person in my employ, man or woman, who gave me any better service."

"You have a strong reason then for wishing to unravel this mystery, and avenge the girl's death if she has been foully dealt with."

"Yes, and you can depend upon it that I shall not spare either pains or expense to get at the truth," the detective declared with an air of firm resolution.

"While the girl was acting for you did you learn anything about her associates, so that you have some ground to go on now?" Tony Western asked.

"No, all I know about her is that she had trouble with her husband, as I related, but that took place a couple of years ago, and I do not believe she has either seen or heard from him since, for she did some work for me about ten months back, and if she had encountered her husband, I feel sure she would have been apt to mention the fact."

"But under the present circumstances the husband would be the first party you would naturally look for, if you satisfy yourself that there has been foul play," Western observed.

"Oh, yes, for I know there was bad blood between them, and yet I am at a loss to see why he should want to murder the girl," Joe Phenix observed, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps he couldn't get a divorce, and the

only way he could get free from the wife was to kill her," Western suggested.

Joe Phenix shook his head.

"No, I do not think that theory will fit in this case. In the first place, from the description the actress gave of her husband I should judge that he was a rather chicken-hearted fellow who hadn't the courage to commit any great crime. The style of man who chiefly distinguishes himself by 'beating' hotels and boarding houses, and subsisting on borrowed money which he coaxes out of silly people who are unwise enough to believe his ghost stories of how great are his expectations across the water."

"Yes, but the trouble about that sort of thing is that the expectations are never realized—the coming drafts for large amounts of money never materialize, the money is always coming in a day or two, but, owing to untoward circumstances, it never arrives."

"From the description the girl gave I am satisfied the husband was a man of that description; and such fellows rarely have the pluck to commit murder, and then, as I said before, there does not seem to be any motive for the crime."

"If the man wanted to secure his freedom he could get a divorce in a dozen different States without any trouble, thanks to the peculiar laws which some of them enjoy, and as far as the girl was concerned I do not think she would have had the slightest objection to his getting a divorce as soon as he pleased."

"She certainly would not have attempted to contest the matter."

"Your reasoning appears to be correct, and there does not seem to be any motive for the crime," Tony Western remarked, thoughtfully.

"But there must have been a motive, and a powerful one, too, or else such a crime would never have been committed," Joe Phenix declared.

"Men do not risk the hangman's noose for nothing!"

"Very true."

"Our game at present is to emulate Br'er Rabbit, and lay low."

"Here is a hotel," and Phenix nodded toward a building on the other side of the street. "It looks as if we might be made comfortable there, and for a while we will be a couple of run-down New York business men who have been advised to spend a week or so in some quiet country town, in order to build up."

"That is a very good steer, as the boys say, and I don't doubt it will go through all right."

"John Josephs will do for my name, and W. Antonio for yours."

Then the two crossed the street, entered the hotel, registered, and Joe Phenix made arrangements for board.

The arrangements completed they took chairs in the front part of the office, sitting so they could command a view of the street.

The clerk had explained that he could not give them as good rooms as he would have liked, on account of having to accommodate a theatrical troupe, which was to play at the Opera House for a week, commencing on that evening.

So when a party of a dozen people came marching into the hotel, four ladies and eight gentlemen, liberally supplied with traveling satchels, canes and umbrellas, and wearing that peculiar air common to the lower-class professionals, who bear themselves as though they were always under the inspection of an audience, the two detectives came to the conclusion that this was the theatrical company.

This opinion was correct.

The manager, a short, fat man, dressed in an extremely "loud" plaid suit, with a profusion of cheap jewelry, and whose face betrayed that he was a descendant of the "chosen people," registered the names of his company, and then marched the majority of them off to look at the rooms.

A couple of the players sauntered to the door and looked out into the street.

One was a man well in years, with scanty iron-gray hair and a thin face, seamed with the lines of care. He wore a black broadcloth suit of the style common to professional men forty years ago; the suit very much the worse for wear, the cloth being shiny from long use.

Upon his head, perched in a jaunty manner over his right eye, was a black silk hat, long out of style, which had evidently seen hard service.

While the man's complexion was pale, the skin being of a yellowish, unhealthy color, his nose, which was the most prominent feature of his face, was very red, and this with his glassy, dull blue eyes gave him a decidedly peculiar appearance.

He was one of the old style of actors who moved as if he was on springs, and did fully as much acting while going about his ordinary business in the daytime as at night when behind the flaring footlights.

His companion was a boyish-looking fellow of twenty, or thereabouts, with a rather dull face, and a good judge of mankind would not have set him down for possessing particularly good sense.

"This is a nice little town, methinks!" exclaimed the old man in a stilted theatrical way, striking a position in the doorway as he spoke and

cutting a figure eight in the air with his light cane.

"Yes, it seems to be a pretty place, but rather quiet," the youth said, addressing his companion with great deference.

"Do you think we will do any business, here?" he continued, asking the question with the air of one addressing an oracle.

"Dear boy, that depends," the old actor replied with a weighty shake of the head.

"Depends upon what?"

"The way the entertainment is managed, of course," the other replied with great dignity.

"Things are handled differently now from what they were twenty years ago when I was in my prime. In those days we depended upon the star, and the legitimate was all the rage. I do remember once that I came to this very town and played Macbeth here to a house crammed from the doors to the footlights. So great was the crush that people even sat upon the edge of the stage, but now in this degenerate age I am compelled to travel around with a barn-storming crowd, playing a lot of measly dramas at cheap prices, ten to thirty cents, and our Jew manager relies upon all sorts of fakes to get the people into the house."

"Oh, it is monstrous!" he continued, in a fine burst of indignation.

"What did we do in the last town?" and his voice trembled with scorn as he put the question.

"First we gave a benefit to the fire department, and to the company selling the most tickets we presented a solid gold fire trumpet, which must have cost this wily sheeney as much as two dollars and a half!"

"Then we had a beauty show, and gave a lady's gold watch to the handsomest woman in the audience, and those watches don't cost a cent less than thirty-six dollars a dozen."

"And then—the crowning climax to the degradation of the drama! on the Saturday night we gave away a squealing porker—a baby pig, to the ugliest man in the house, the matter to be decided by the vote of the audience, and the miserable, low-lived Jew managed the thing so that I was unanimously elected—I got the pig, and then he bought it of me for a dollar, and I do not doubt that next Saturday night here the pig will be given away again; but if that degraded descendant of Israel's ancient race puts up another job on me, and I get the pig, hang me if I don't choke him with his own porker!"

"The audience evidently thought that was a good joke."

"The rabble are always glad for a chance to throw mud at their superiors!" the old man declared, with great dignity.

Then the old actor happened to notice that the door to his left led into a saloon.

His watery eyes glistened, and he leaned in a condescending way on the shoulder of the youth.

"Johnny, me royal nibs, I have been a good friend to you since you became a member of Cohen's Great Excelsior New York Star Theater Company, hey?" he asked in a wheedling way.

"Oh, yes."

"You were a stranger, and the main guy of the show, the colossal Cohen, although not a Gentile, yet he followed the scriptural advice, and took you in."

"Yes, he did, indeed!" replied the youth, making a wry face.

"You paid that remarkable specimen of a theatrical manager a hundred dollars for the privilege of coming with his troupe and learning to be an actor, and so far, all the acting you have done has been to juggle the tables and chairs off the stage and on, and wrestling with the 'flats,' catch as catch can, like a veteran scene-shifter," and the old man then indulged in a hollow, scornful laugh.

"Yes, but he says he is going to give me a chance at some speaking parts next week."

"And that is because one of the gang is going to leave, and he thinks he can save a salary by putting you on."

"Oho! a wily man is this same Master Sheeney!" the veteran declared, with a tragic air.

"Well, if I get through all right, he will have to pay me a regular salary, not a dollar or two a week, as I get now," the youth remarked in an aggrieved way.

"Oh, don't! Have mercy, gentle sir, I pray you, on the rest of us who do toil with might and main, that we our bread may gain!" spouted the old man.

"If you should strike him for five dollars a week it would bust up the concern. He never would be able to stand a pull of that kind."

"I can't live on nothing," the youth replied.

"Be patient! the blackberries will soon be ripe, and then you need not starve!" the old fellow rejoined with a sardonic smile.

"I have been drawing from five to ten dollars a week from my folks ever since I started," the youth complained. "And the old man is beginning to kick, you know, for he expected that after I got to be an actor I would make plenty of money."

"Ah, yes, that is the general impression; but

all is not gold that glitters, and though some few lucky people do make fortunes on the stage, the rank and file have mighty hard scratching."

"But, I say, Johnny, me boy, my advice has been valuable to you, eh?"

"Oh, yes, but you have played some awful tricks on me, like sending me all over Poughkeepsie to buy a box of wrinkles at the drug stores and fruit shops," responded the boy, reproachfully.

The veteran laughed heartily in his affected, theatrical way.

"That is a time-honored joke!" he declared.

"All beginners have to go through an experience of that kind. But I gave you good advice about your name."

"Now Johnny Timkins may be all very well in private or commercial life; it would not look badly on a grocer's window, and would be quite in place over the door of a butcher's shop, but when you come to put it on a play-bill, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Johnny Timkins, the public, my dear boy, would not have it!"

"Yes, you are right: an actor wants a high-sounding name."

"Exactly, and the appellation I suggested to you fills the bill, 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, John Macready.'"

"There, I would like to see the man bold enough to find fault with that!" And as he spoke the veteran flourished his cane in the air, pretended to parry a thrust from an imaginary opponent, and then run the said opponent through the body with neatness and dispatch.

"Take my own name, for instance," he continued after the sword exercise was over. "I was christened Boggs—Leander Wolfe Boggs!"

"The Leander is all right, but the Boggs is enough to appall both gods and men!" the old fellow declared in his absurd way.

"Then I came a little piece of legerdemain. L. W. Boggs became Leander B. Wolfe, a fine, euphonious appellation, and I am proud to say it has been borne in an honorable position on the bill-boards from Maine to California, although I will have to admit that my professional associates do not cotton kindly to the Wolfe, and that very few of them, for the last twenty years, have ever called me anything but 'Old Man Boggs!'" and the veteran shook his head in a mournful way, as though the custom pained him.

"But they all give you credit of knowing a deal about acting," the youth remarked, looking at the other as though he considered him to be a very great man indeed.

"They are right! For over forty years have I 'strutted my brief hour upon the stage!'" the old man declared, with a flourish of his cane.

"I have played with all the great stars, and at all the principal theaters in the country; the mighty men—the scribes who wield the critical pens have called me a child of genius, and when the spirit of prophecy was strong upon them predicted that I would one day be the leading tragedian of the world!"

"Alas, how are the mighty fallen!" he continued, with an abrupt change of tone.

"Here am I now, right in the prime of life—in full possession of all my marvelous powers, but instead of touring the country as America's greatest actor, with my own combination, playing nothing but the legitimate in the principal theaters, I am traveling with a little ten-cent show doing the old huffers of the sensational dramas!"

Then the veteran heaved a deep sigh, took out a handkerchief, which was far from being clean, and proceeded to wipe away some imaginary tears.

"How comes it that it is so, Mr. Wolfe?" asked the youth, in eager curiosity.

"One word solves the riddle!" the veteran declared, sinking his voice to a hoarse stage whisper.

"One word?"

"Yes."

"And that is?"

"Budget! yes, sir, b-u-d-g-e-t!" and the old man spelt out the word on his fingers.

"I was too fond of the rosy—too much inclined to look upon the wine when it was red in the glass."

"It is the fault of many a man of genius. The same power which gave us the talent by means of which we might rise to the skies, hampers our wings with this leaden weight so that when we attempt to soar, down we go in the dust!"

Very tragic indeed was the old man, both in face and voice, and if he had only been able to act as well at night, when on the boards, as he usually did when he got excited over his wrongs in private life, he most surely would have made a hit.

But in truth, the veteran, when he got on the stage, despite his long experience, was a very common-place actor, indeed.

"Yes, sir, the love of 'lush' kept me down, and though of late years I have conquered my appetite, so that it no longer interferes with me in the discharge of my duties, yet it is too late!"

"My bolt is shot!"

"There is a tide which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune!" he spouted. "But I have

missed it, and to the dilatory wretch who will not open his door when Fame's angel knocks, comes a blank future and an unmarked grave!"

And as he finished the speech, the veteran hid his face in his handkerchief.

"You must brace up, Mr. Wolfe!" the youth exclaimed, in a consoling way. "You will make you" hit yet, I am sure of it."

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick!" quoted the old actor.

"But, gentle friend, pardon this emotion!" he exclaimed. "It is not often that I give way, but when I think of the past, I am tempted to exclaim: 'Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud without our special wonder?'"

"But, really, the violence of my emotion has made me weak."

"Johnny, my dear boy, have you got the price of two beers in your pocket?" and he leaned in a very affectionate way on the shoulder of the other as he put the question.

"No, I haven't; that thirty cents I spent with you last night, after the show, cleaned me out."

"Ah, faith, by my halidome! but we had a rouse, eh?" exclaimed the veteran, suddenly recovering from his depression, and slapping the other on the back in the most jovial manner.

"You must bone this Jew, that no Shakespeare drew, for a stake, and we will set 'em up again to-night!"

"All right! I'll do it!"

"Hello!" exclaimed the veteran, happening to look down the street. "By all the gods! here comes Lorraine Trevanion!"

"The husband of the dead woman!" whispered Phenix to Western.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENGLISHMAN.

"Is it possible?" Tony Western asked, surprised by the declaration.

"Lorraine Trevanion was the name of Mignon Lawrence's husband," Joe Phenix replied.

"Of course it is possible that it is not the same man, but the chances are that it is, for he was in the habit of hanging around the theaters and so would be acquainted with theatrical people."

"All we have to do is to keep quiet and we will soon find out whether it is the other's husband or not."

"But if it is the husband isn't it rather suspicious to see him make his appearance here just at this time?" Tony Western asked.

"Yes, undoubtedly, and it is not probable that it is the result of accident either."

These whispered words were rapidly exchanged between the two, while the actors were staring down the street.

"Do you mean that English-looking fellow who is reading one of our programmes in the shop window?" the youth asked.

"Yes, that gay and dashing looking blade, a very proper man, one framed to make women false!" the old actor snouted.

"I know him of old!"

"Is he an actor?" asked young Timkin, eagerly. "He doesn't look like one."

"Oh, no! he is an English milord—a gentleman of high degree; that is, if you are willing to believe what he says, and a great many do, you know, or else he wouldn't be able to get along as well as he does," and the veteran stuck his tongue in his cheek in a peculiarly significant way.

"Why, isn't he all right?"

"Oh, yes, he is very much all right!" the old actor exclaimed with a sarcastic laugh. "It is the other people who are all wrong after he gets through with them. Do you twig, me noble youth?"

"He looks like a gentleman—a regular high-flyer, in fact," Timkin remarked, not exactly knowing what to make of it.

"Yes, yes, he is! He comes of the blood royal, demme! A finer gentleman you will not discover in all England from the Land's End to John o' Groats, but for all that I would not advise you to play billiards, or cards with him, and put up money on the game, for he will skin you so quickly that after the operation is performed you will never be able to tell how it was done."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the youth in wonder, "he doesn't look like that kind of a man!"

"My dear Johnny, you are really such an innocent duck that you ought not to be allowed to go around unattended!" the veteran declared in a commiserating way.

"Now, really, are you such a greenhorn as to suppose that you can tell much about a man by his looks—particularly a party of this kind?"

"Oh, no; if the average man was sharp enough to detect upon first acquaintance whether a fellow was all right or not, what chance would the birds of prey stand to make a living?"

"Not much I suppose."

"Right you are, me noble nibs!" the veteran cried. "This man's appearance is his stock in trade, and on it he thrives."

"I do not think there is much doubt but what the fellow does come of a good family in England, and it may be true that he receives regu-

lar remittances from home, but he is a shark of the first water for all that."

"He is well educated—claims to have graduated at Eton—and the tale may be true, but he is a black sheep, all the same!"

"The very fact that he is a gentleman, educated and accomplished, really a man of great natural powers, too, only makes him the more dangerous."

"Such a fellow can secure the *entree* into good society, and when he gets hold of a blue-blood youth, with plenty of cash, and an ambition to become a high-roller, this Englishman is just the kind of fellow to put him up to the time of day, and at the same time relieve him of all his loose lucre, and perform the operation in such an elegant manner, too, that the victim, although he has a dim consciousness that he has been robbed in the worst kind of a way, doesn't see any chance to either get back his money or expose the hawk who has plucked him clean to the flesh!"

"Well, well, you would never take him to be that kind of a man by looking at him!" the youth exclaimed.

"He is not the man to 'wear his heart upon his sleeve for caws to peck at!' spouted the veteran."

"In his line he is a genius," he continued. "I have met quite a number of these adventurers, men of all nations, but this fellow can hold his own with any of them."

"I happen to know all about him, you see, dear boy, because I was in the theater when he married one of the actresses."

The detectives pricked up their ears, metaphorically speaking, at this.

The old actor, after the fashion of the low-class professional, was talking without paying any heed as to whether his words were overheard or not.

Men of his stamp are always posing for an audience, whether on or off the stage.

It makes no difference to them, and they have the habit of asking to have the butter passed at a hotel-table in almost the same tone which they use on the stage when in the drama they cry: "Turn, catiff, and face thy death!"

And owing to this fact the detectives were able to overhear every word of the conversation without being put to the trouble of playing the eavesdropper.

"Oh, he married an actress then?" Timkin exclaimed, very much interested.

"Yes, a nice girl, although she couldn't act very much," the veteran remarked, with a patronizing way.

"She was rather good-looking, though, and had a fine figure, and that helped her along," he continued.

"She was one of the quiet kind, too, not the girl to push herself forward, and that kept her back, for the principal thing that an actor or actress requires in the present degenerate age of the drama is plenty of gall, dear boy! The more gall—the greater the success!"

"Yes, I suppose so," the youth remarked, a little dubiously. "You certainly ought to know."

"Believe me, gentle sir, I do!" cried the veteran, throwing out his chest and executing a bit of sword practice with his cane.

"Genius nowadays is nowhere alongside of gall! Cheek is the long pole which bags the per-simmons!"

"I don't wonder at this fellow being able to mash an actress," the youth remarked, with an admiring look at the subject of the conversation. "He has lots of style."

"You bet! Why, he travels on his style!" the old actor declared.

"If he had not been an out and outer, he would never have caught this particular actress, for she was one of the quiet kind; a girl with a heap of good, solid sense was this same Mignon Lawrence."

The detectives exchanged looks.

"It is the man," Western whispered to his chief.

"Yes, I fancied it would turn out to be, and he will bear watching, too," Joe Phenix replied.

"That was the name of his wife?" Timkin asked.

"Yes, and by the way, I wonder what has become of her? It is a dog's age since I have seen her name on a playbill!" the old actor remarked reflectively.

By this time the Englishman had finished the perusal of the bill in the window, and came sauntering up the street toward the hotel.

He was about the medium size, rather slightly built, and with a typical English face, round, red and white complexion, blonde hair, and small yellow side-whiskers of the mutton-chop pattern.

He was neatly dressed, and had that unmistakable air about him which denotes a man who has been well brought up.

"Aha, me noble lord, can I believe me eyes? How fares it with your gracious self?" exclaimed Old Man Boggs, as the Englishman came within hailing distance.

"Why, old chap, how are you?" the Englishman responded, speaking with a peculiar drawl.

"I am as fine as the finest silk!" the veteran responded in a deep, base tone.

Then he shook hands with the new-comer, and introduced young Timkin, who felt considerably embarrassed by the style of the gentleman.

"And what brings you to this humble village—a truant disposition, good me lord?" the veteran asked.

"Oh, no; I came up on a little matter of business, don'tcherknow! You are with the Cohen troupe, I see," Trevanion remarked.

"Yes, I am the slave of the Jew for a paltry pittance!" the actor declared, in his most tragic manner.

"How is business?"

"Well, so so, but I presume it is as good as can be expected with such wretched management!" was Old Man Boggs's reply, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"The fact is the Sheeney has got it into his noddle that the people want sensational dramas and such rot, when in reality they are hungering for the legitimate."

"If the Jew had the brains of a rat he would put up Macbeth, Richard the Third, and Romeo and Juliet."

"I played Romeo here twenty years ago, and you couldn't get the people into the house!"

"What was the matter? Wouldn't the landlord open the doors until you put up the rent?" the Englishman asked, with a perfectly serious air.

The veteran looked at the speaker suspiciously for a moment, and then he burst into an affected laugh.

"Aha! touch me not so nearly!" And then the old actor threw himself into position, and after a "parade" with his cane, ran the other through the body, after the stage fashion, the cane passing underneath the arm.

"Dead for a ducat, dead!" he spouted.

"I took a run up on purpose to see Cohen," the Englishman explained. "I heard at one of the dramatic agencies that he wanted a treasurer, and I thought I wouldn't mind taking a trip around the country for a little while, just for the fun of the thing, you know!"

"Oh, yes, he wants a treasurer, but I don't believe you would fill the bill at all!" Boggs declared.

"Why not?"

"It is an 'angel' he wants; some greenhorn who will be soft enough to pay him five hundred, or a thousand dollars, for an interest in the show, and from what I know of you I don't believe the snap will suit."

"Oh, no, I am not such an ass!" the Englishman replied, decidedly. "I've had my journey for my pains, then?"

"Yes; but, by the way, how is your wife, the charming Mignon?" the veteran asked.

"My wife, Mignon?" the other exclaimed. "I don't understand you!"

CHAPTER V.

A DENIAL.

THE old actor looked astonished and the detectives exchanged glances from behind the newspapers which they had taken up, and were pretending to read, thus adroitly concealing that they were paying earnest attention to the conversation.

From the position which the Englishman occupied on the sidewalk it was not possible for him to see either Phenix or Western, and so he spoke less cautiously than he might have done if he had been aware there were witnesses to the conversation.

"Me noble lord, are we playing at cross-purposes?" the veteran exclaimed.

"It was for the lady you married out of the Paragon Theater, Miss Mignon Lawrence, I inquired."

"Yes, I presumed so; but there is some deuced mistake about the thing; I never was married to her."

"I am amazed!" the old actor declared in a deep tragedy tone. "Why, it was given out that you and the lady were married, and you certainly used to escort her to and from the theater."

"Oh, yes, I admit that; it is a fact certainly," Trevanion replied.

"But that was because we lived in the same house, and I will admit too that I was a little sweet on the girl, but it was only a flirtation, don'tcherknow?"

"A flirtation, eh?" remarked the veteran, evidently incredulous.

"Yes, I could not have married her, my dear fellow, no matter how much I may have wanted so to do, for I was already married at the time I made Miss Lawrence's acquaintance," the Englishman explained.

"Well, if that was the case you certainly could not have married the lady," the old actor observed with stately dignity. "But I do not understand how the rumors got abroad in regard to the matter," he continued, shaking his head in a puzzled way.

"Everybody in and around the theater believed that a union had taken place betwixt you twain."

"Yes, I was congratulated by quite a number of my acquaintances at the time who had heard the report, but I understood how the rumor started. Miss Lawrence was one of those smart American girls who fancy that all they have to

do is to smile upon a man to bring them to their knees.

"She knew that I was a good catch, and because I was silly enough to flirt a little with her she fancied she had me securely hooked, and, acting on that belief, confided to some of her particular friends that we were going to be married. That is the way the report got around, but as I tell you, as I was already bound hand and foot to another woman it was impossible for me to have married Miss Mignon, unless I was fool enough to commit bigamy, and I can assure you that I was not."

"Ah, yes, I see," Old Man Boggs observed, nodding his head with the gravity of a judge.

"Of course, all I knew about the matter was what people said, and seeing you acting as escort to the lady so constantly it was but natural that the world at large should believe there was something in the rumor."

"Ah, yes, I knew that the gossips were busy about the matter, but as I couldn't very well be married without my knowing it, no matter how anxious the lady might be to have the ceremony performed, I never troubled myself to go out of my way to contradict the report," the Englishman remarked in his languid, careless way.

"If somebody came right to me and talked about my having married the girl, why, I immediately told them there wasn't any truth in the report, but you understand, my dear fellow, I did not go to the trouble of putting a card in the newspapers to contradict the rumor."

"Yes, yes, believe me, gentle lord, I do fully appreciate your position in this most weighty matter!" the old actor declared, with an air of owl-like wisdom.

"I have one of the best little wives in the world, an American girl too, you understand, and such a useless rascal as I am ought not to have such a treasure."

"I made her acquaintance, and married her, during one of my Western trips, and when I was wedded I honestly intended to settle down, give up this Bohemian life of mine, and become a respectable member of society."

"Yes, yes, I understand; many a time and oft I have made vows as sacred as those sworn by a cowed monk, but the flesh is weak and the temptation strong!" Old Man Boggs declared, sagely.

"Yes, you are right, I was going to buy a big farm—a ranch as they call them in the West, and go in for cattle-raising, and all that sort of thing, you know, but I never got at it."

"I was too fond of larking around a big city and finally I got in some ugly scrapes which came to my wife's knowledge, and so we quarreled and separated."

"It is the old, old story, the chains of Hymen hang lightly on the average man!"

"Mind you! I do not speak from my own personal experience for I was never married. I have always believed that my hat ought to cover my family, and as I got that idea at an early stage of my career, the smiles of fair women, charm they never so wisely, never had power upon my flinty heart!" And as he made the declaration, which was done in the most tragic style, the veteran pounded on his chest with his clinched fist.

"It would have been wiser for me if I had kept out of the matrimonial noose, I presume," Trevanion admitted.

"But as it is a fact that few men do what they should in this world, I don't suppose I made a bigger fool of myself than the majority of men."

"I will do my better half the credit of saying that she behaved like a lady in the matter," the Englishman continued.

"When she found out just what a reprobate I was—sort of, mind you, I am one of the peculiar sort of men who when they are caught in a scrape do not attempt to lie out of it, but come up to the scratch and take my gruel like a man—she made up her mind that she and I could not travel in double harness any more, as you Americans say, and so we parted."

"She went on her way and I came East, and, really, gentlemen, of my own knowledge I couldn't tell you whether my wife is alive or dead at this present moment."

"Ah, dear boy, you can depend upon it that she is alive!" the veteran declared. "If she were dead you would be certain to hear of it. Ill news travels fast, and when calamity knocks at the door all portals open," the veteran declared.

It was a peculiarity of the old actor to converse in regard to the most trivial matters as though he was a high and mighty potentate discussing an affair of state upon which the destinies, or the lives, of a nation might depend.

And as he had been on the stage for years, playing chiefly "old men characters," as the roles to which he had been assigned are technically called, these being chiefly stern fathers, dealing with undutiful sons and daughters, magistrates, ancient and modern, meting out justice from the judicial chair, it had become a second nature for him to interlard his conversation with all sorts of quotations from the plays in which he had performed, and so in private life he bore himself with a fearful weight of

dignity, just as if he really believed himself to be one of the great and mighty rulers of men whom he had often portrayed upon the mimic stage.

"Yes, I do not doubt that you are right," the Englishman assented, in a careless and indifferent tone.

"I presume my wife is alive, or else I would have been notified."

"Still, Chicago, where my wife made her home, is a long ways from New York, don'tcherknow, and she might have died there without the news reaching me."

"Yes, if she was not a prominent member of society, it is quite possible," the veteran remarked, after cogitating for a few minutes about the matter with the gravity of an owl.

"She was an orphan girl, without a relative in the world, as far as she knew," Trevanion explained.

"And as she was a quiet, retired girl, who always shrunk from strangers, it is not likely, even if she had died, that much of anything would be said about it."

"Someway, though, I have got in the habit lately of looking over the death-notices in the papers," the Englishman remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"I didn't know, don't you see, but what I might some time come across the name of my wife."

"After we parted she resumed her maiden name, Constance Blakeley, for she was so angry with me for running after these actresses, and getting my name in the newspapers coupled with some extremely uncomplimentary remarks, that she declared she would never be known by my name again," and then the speaker indulged in a hearty laugh, just as if he believed he had given utterance to a good joke.

"Ah, yes, women will take these odd ideas into their heads sometimes, forgetful, my noble lord, you know, of the old saying: 'To err is human, to forgive divine!'" the old actor declared, in his bombastic way.

At this moment, Cohen, the manager, made his appearance, and Old Man Boggs, with great solemnity, introduced him to the Englishman.

Trevanion explained the nature of his business, and the keen black eyes of the Jew sparkled.

As the Englishman was well dressed, and bore the general appearance of a man who had money, the manager at once jumped to the conclusion that he might turn out to be the "angel" for whom he was looking.

"Oh, yesh, I want a treasurer wid der show, my tear sir," he responded, in the most affable manner. "A gen'leman who ish a gen'leman, and who will be willing to take an interest in der speculation."

"You see, my tear fr'en', there ish more business than I can attend to mineself, and I would like to get a gen'leman who would be willing to buy an interest."

"It is a fine speculation, and I would sell an interest sheep for the sake of getting a good man to help me run der thing."

And then the wily Hebrew rubbed his hands together and grinned expectantly at the Englishman.

Trevanion was not a man to beat about the bush and he came quickly to the point.

"Well, really, you know, I wouldn't care to do anything of that kind," he responded. "I wouldn't mind going with you for a few weeks just for a sort of a lark, don'tcherknow, but I wouldn't care to put up any cash, for I am not looking for any investment of the kind."

The Jew was a shrewd man, and from the decided way in which the Englishman spoke he comprehended that he could not hope to get any money out of him.

CHAPTER VI.

PUTTING THE THREADS TOGETHER.

"But as it is rather dry talking, gentlemen, suppose we all go in and have a drink!" Trevanion suggested.

The old actor immediately struck an attitude, while his watery eyes glistened.

"Aha, my noble lord, now do you strike me fair between wind and water!" he cried.

"Tis not often that I take a drink, but when I do, it is generally about this time."

"Come along!" said Trevanion, as he led the way to the saloon, passing through the office, and within a yard of the two detectives, who affected to be busily engaged with their newspapers as the party went by.

As we have said, the Englishman was a good-looking fellow; one whose face was calculated to make a favorable impression upon strangers, and yet an extra good judge of the "human face divine," an expert, who, from long experience was a past-master of the art of reading a man's character by his face, would not have been pleased with the eyes.

The Englishman's light blue orbs were shifty and unsteady, and he had a peculiar trick of avoiding the glances of those with whom he conversed, seldom looking anybody straight in the eye.

As the party passed by the two detectives, neither the manager or the two actors took any notice of them.

Trevanion and the Jew were in the advance, the manager rubbing his hands softly together and smiling affably at the Englishman, going upon the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, and though his soul hungered for a man who would invest money in his show, yet he was quite willing to do the agreeable to a fellow who was liberal-minded enough to pay for the drinks; behind them came the old actor, strutting along with his head held high in the air, and his arm thrown affectionately around the neck of young Timkin.

The detectives pretended to be absorbed in their newspapers, and paid no heed to the others.

Trevanion, though, as he passed, cast a stealthy glance at the two, just as though he had a suspicion that they might be up to some mischief.

A common screen door separated the saloon from the hotel office, and after it had closed behind the party, Tony Western nodded to Phenix and said:

"Did you notice how that Englishman eyed us?"

"Oh, yes, the fact did not escape my observation."

"Just such a look as a man might give who had committed a crime and was afraid of encountering a detective in every man he met."

"Yes, you have figured the thing out about right, I think. He has either been in trouble, or is bent upon committing some mischief, and so is keeping his eyes open to see who is around."

"What do you think of this story of his that he was never married to the actress?"

"It is a falsehood!" Joe Phenix replied, promptly. "I know that he was her husband, for I saw the letter which he wrote when he robbed her of all she possessed and fled to the West."

"The girl, too, is the soul of honor, and I know she would not deceive me about such a matter."

"What is his object in denying the marriage?"

"It is a riddle which at present I cannot explain," the great detective replied, thoughtfully.

"The man has some purpose in view, of course, or else he would not have denied the marriage."

"He is a different sort of man from what I expected to see," Joe Phenix continued.

"From what the girl told me about him I got the idea that he was one of the English adventurers of the Jeremy Diddler stamp, a genteel sponge and swindler, who managed to pick up a living by roping young flats, with more money than brains, into billiard games, and little card parties."

"From his looks I should judge him to be a man capable of flying at higher game than that."

"Such is the opinion I have formed," Joe Phenix assented.

"He is up to some game here, I imagine," Tony Western observed thoughtfully.

"Oh, yes, no reliance can be placed upon his yarn about coming up here to get an engagement with this little show!" Joe Phenix declared.

"He is not the kind of man to be content to fool away his time in little country towns with a party of this description."

"The humdrum life would give him the horrors in a week."

"That is true enough; a high-roller of his description, with a little two-cent show of this kind, would be like a fish out of water."

"Oh, there is a game at the back of it, of course!" the great detective declared, decidedly.

It was necessary for him to come to this town for some particular purpose, and he was looking ahead to the time when some legal functionary, with the right to ask questions, should say to him: "How comes it that you happened to be in Tarrytown at this particular time?"

"Oh, yes, I understand. Then he could reply, in the most innocent manner possible: 'Why, it was just by accident. I heard in New York that this theatrical party was in want of a treasurer, and so I took a run up to see if I couldn't get the situation.'"

"Exactly, and he will have the theatrical people to back him up, for they will testify that he did apply for the position."

"To come right down to the point, then, he knows that his wife is dead, and has come up here for the express purpose of identifying the lady!" Tony Western observed.

"That is the conclusion that I have reached. Circumstances compels him to arrange the matter so he will, by sheer accident, make the discovery that it is his wife who has come to her death in such a mysterious way."

"But why don't he pretend that he read an account of the affair in the newspaper, and as the description of the woman resembled his wife so much, he thought he would come up and take a look at the body?"

"He wishes to avoid all chance of exciting suspicion that he had any expectation of hearing that anything had happened to his wife."

"It is over a year since he deserted her. It is my impression they have never met since that

time—in fact, I don't believe the woman has ever heard of him, for I feel sure she would have told me of the circumstance, for one of the inducements that I held out to her to enter my service as a secret agent, was that if ever the opportunity offered, I would do all in my power to assist her to revenge herself upon the man who had treated her so badly."

"Your conclusions are sound, I think," the other remarked.

"The man has come here for the express purpose of identifying the body and has arranged the matter so it will appear as if the circumstance that the unknown woman was the one whom he deserted was brought to his notice by pure accident."

"Now, I am beginning to see why he denied to these actors that the woman was his wife," Joe Phenix remarked.

"He will identify the body as being that of an actress with whom he was once acquainted, not as that of the woman who was his wife."

"Yes, but has he got the matter covered up so the truth can't come out?" Tony Western asked.

"It is probable that he has; he knows, of course, how the ground lies, and it is not likely he would set up a claim which could be easily overturned."

"The woman is dead; she cannot dispute his assertion that he was never married to her."

"The particulars in regard to the union, where the couple were married, when, and by whom, I know nothing about; but I think the chances are good that so long as the woman's mouth is sealed by death, and she cannot relate the particulars, no one else will be able to give the information."

"When the scamp deserted the girl he broke open her trunk, and helped himself to all her valuables, leaving an impudent letter behind in which he stated that as he was her husband, he considered he had a perfect right to help himself to her things as husband and wife being one, neither could steal from the other."

"Adding insult to injury, eh?"

"Yes, and it is probable that at the time he also took the girl's marriage-certificate; and any other proofs that she may have had of her marriage."

"This is merely an assumption of mine, of course. I don't really know anything about the matter, for the girl never mentioned the subject. She had become so disgusted with the man that she was glad to get rid of him, and it was a matter of perfect indifference to her whether the man got a divorce or not. In fact, I think she would have been glad if he had taken steps in that direction."

"She was spiteful about the matter, it must be admitted, was anxious for revenge, and had fully made up her mind to have a reckoning with the fugitive if she ever encountered him."

"That was only natural."

"Now we will try to draw these threads together a little, so as to see if we cannot get into the web of this mystery," Joe Phenix remarked, puzzling over the matter as a scholar would with a difficult problem.

"First, the man knows that the girl is dead; second, he is here for the purpose of identifying the body."

"The inference of the first is, that he has a guilty knowledge of how she came to her death, but that is directly contradicted by the second; for if he has any knowledge of the affair it is his game to keep in the background, and not attract attention to himself by coming forward and identifying the body."

Tony Western shook his head, and a puzzled expression appeared on his face.

"The one does seem to be a direct contradiction to the other," he observed.

"Yes, it looks so, but I am doing the man the honor to suppose that he is too adroit a rascal to make such a mistake."

"And now here comes up another point to still further deepen the mystery."

"Why was the girl killed? I am assuming, mind you, that she was murdered, for I do not believe it was a suicide."

"At present I am inclined to the belief that the man had a hand in the woman's death, but what his motive was for killing her is a most unfathomable mystery."

"I cannot at present see how he could possibly be benefited by her death."

"If he had wanted his freedom he could have got a divorce easily enough without taking a crime on his soul."

"I am deeply interested in the case and it will be strange if I do not succeed in trapping this fellow, let him plot and plan as wisely as he can!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE RECOGNITION.

At this point the voice of the old actor came distinctly to their ears.

"It may be all right, me noble lords, for you to visit a scene of horror of this kind—to look upon a sight which might appall the devil, but you can count me out, if you please," he declared.

"I am like the man who fell out of the balloon, I am not in it!"

"Not for Joe, oh, dear no, not for Joseph!"

the veteran chanted in a deep, base voice.

"I hav'n't lost any women, young or old, living or dead, and I don't feel inclined to visit any chancel houses! 'I take no interest in these rural sports!'"

"Aha! they are talking about going to see the body!" Joe Phenix said to his companion in a cautious tone.

"That is the first step which I expected my gentleman to take, and if the identification is not the second then I miss my guess."

"Come!" and the great detective rose to his feet. "It will be well for us to be near at hand, for I have a curiosity to see how the man will work the trick."

"It is possible, you know, that we may be able from his manner to get a clew."

"Yes, the idea is a good one," Tony Western remarked as the two made their way to the street.

"And if we are on the ground when he arrives at the undertaker's place it will not be apt to arouse his suspicions that we are playing the spy upon him, for he will have to be extra smart to jump to the conclusion that we overheard any part of the conversation."

"Yes, but our bird is a downy one," Joe Phenix observed with a shake of the head. "And we are too unlike the average inhabitant of this place for him to take us to be a couple of the residents."

"He certainly did appear to be sizing us up when he passed into the saloon."

"Oh, yes, there is no doubt in my mind that his suspicions are already excited in regard to us, but that does not amount to anything," the great detective added.

"He knew when he started from New York that he would be certain to find plenty of detectives on the scene, for in a case of this kind there are always lots of man-hunters, actual and would-be, eager to try their skill and luck."

"More luck than skill, as a rule," Tony Western commented.

"Yes, for the detective is born and not made, so that it is not possible for every man to enter the ranks of the profession and achieve success."

By this time the two had reached the street, and were well on their way to the undertaker's shop.

There was about the same crowd of loungers congregated in and around the building that had been there when the detectives paid their previous visit.

The undertaker's shop had now become the general loafing place of the village.

The detectives sauntered into the shop and got into conversation with the loungers; selecting a position near the door so they could watch all that took place in the inner room, which was separated from the front one by a thin board partition of so flimsy a nature that any conversation in an ordinary tone of voice which took place in one room could be easily overheard in the other.

From the loungers the detectives obtained the information that the arrival of the doctors for the purpose of making an examination of the remains, so as to determine the cause of the death, was momentarily expected.

The two had been in the place some ten minutes when the Englishman made his arrival, accompanied by the manager and young Timkins.

The veteran actor had stuck to his resolutions not to waste his time in such a gruesome visit.

The undertaker was on the alert to receive all strangers, and so he came forward when the three entered.

"Is there any objection to our taking a look at the body?" the Englishman asked, as the undertaker advanced.

"Oh, no; certainly not," the undertaker replied. "May I ask if you have missed any one who answers to the description of this unfortunate young woman?"

"Well, really, now, as far as I am concerned I don't know what sort of a looking woman she was," Trevanion replied.

"The full description was published in the newspapers," the undertaker exclaimed, amazed that any apparently intelligent man should not be in possession of all the facts appertaining to the tragedy.

"Oh, yes, but I do not trouble myself much about the newspapers, don'tcherknow?" Trevanion replied in his languid way.

"I just glance over the news, but I never read the police reports, or peruse the accounts of these horrible affairs. I would rather read something more pleasant and agreeable."

"We just came out of pure curiosity, mine fr'en," the Jew explained.

"Then, too, ash I am a professional mans, I tink I ought to see all de sights of der kind dot I can," he continued.

"My name ish Cohen, and I am der proprietor of der Excelsior New York Star Theater Company, dot makes its first appearance dis evening at der opera house for six nights and a matinee on der Saturday, prices, ten, twenty, and thirty cents."

"Allow me to have de pleasure of presenting you mid one of der programmes."

And then, to the disgust of the Englishman, plainly apparent in his face, the wily manager who never lost a chance of advertising his entertainment, in season or out of season, drew out a bunch of playbills and distributed them to the men in the room.

"Oh, there isn't any objection to anybody seeing the remains," the undertaker remarked.

"In my opinion there is much more chance of having the body identified by allowing all who please to make the inspection."

"I can recall a somewhat similar case where the remains of a strange man who fell dead upon the street from an attack of heart disease lay for three days before the body was identified, and then it was just by accident, a man happened to stop in to see me upon a little matter of private business and recognized the body. Some of the wise people of the town who want to run everything to suit themselves have found fault with me because I am willing to allow anybody that wishes to inspect the remains, yet with this other case in my mind I am satisfied I am pursuing the right course."

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that," the Englishman assented. "You must not make a 'star-chamber' business out of the affair if you are anxious to have the remains identified."

"Mine gootness! dot would be a foolish way to work der business!" Cohen declared.

The wily manager always made it a rule to agree with everybody, if he possibly could, thinking it was good business policy.

"Any one who ever saw the girl would be certain to recognize her," the undertaker remarked. "For she looks very natural; in fact, more like a sleeping girl than a dead one. But walk in, gentlemen, and see for yourselves."

The three followed the undertaker into the rear apartment, and the majority of the loungers came tagging behind, while the rest crowded in the doorway, all anxious to see if the new-comers would be able to dispel the mystery which enshrouded the beautiful unknown.

In the rear of the men in the doorway were Joe Phenix and Tony Western.

When the Englishman and his companions entered the shop, they had retreated to one corner, and, with their backs turned to the door, got behind a group there, anxious to avoid the Englishman's notice, thinking that if Trevanion saw them his suspicions might be excited, for they understood that his inspection of them in the hotel office had been so keen that he would be sure to recognize them if he saw their faces again.

From their present position they could see and hear all that occurred just as well as though they were in the room by Trevanion's side.

The face of the dead girl was covered by a wet cloth, and, as the three approached, the undertaker removed the cloth, exposing the features to view.

An exclamation of astonishment came from the Englishman.

"Great heavens! can it be possible?" he cried, apparently horror-stricken, as he stared at the face of the dead woman.

"Ah, do you recognize her?" the undertaker exclaimed.

And all the bystanders watched with the utmost eagerness, for one and all fancied that an important disclosure was at hand.

"Recognize her! Great heavens, man, it is my wife!" Trevanion cried.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE.

THE hearers were amazed, for the words created a decided sensation.

The two detectives were not surprised though, for they had expected just such a thing.

"The game is going on just as we anticipated," Tony Western whispered in Joe Phenix's ear.

"Yes, but, really, I am completely in the dark as to why he has chosen to play it," the great detective responded in the same cautious tone.

"Your wife, sir?" the undertaker asked, fully as much amazed as the rest.

"Yes, my heavens! I little expected when I entered this apartment to look upon such a sight!" Trevanion declared in a mournful tone.

"Were you not aware of her absence?" the undertaker questioned, puzzled by this strange occurrence.

"No, for we have been separated for nearly a year. Her home was in Chicago, while I have made mine in New York, and until I was so horribly surprised by the sight of her dead face, I had no idea that she was in the East at all," the Englishman explained.

The bystanders looked at each other, and upon the majority of the faces distrust and doubt was written.

That the husband and wife should be separated, and then the woman perish in such an awful manner, seemed to them to argue some deep mystery.

"You are quite sure that you have not made any mistake about this matter?" the undertaker asked, assuming a judicial look.

"Very often, you know, mistakes in identify-

ing bodies are made," he added. "I have known three women to claim one body, and each woman was positive it was the remains of her husband, and then it turned out that all three men were alive, and the body was that of a perfect stranger, whom none of the three women had ever seen."

"Oh, no, unfortunately; there is no doubt in my mind that this is the body of my wife," the Englishman responded, positively.

"I do not identify her by her clothes, you know, for as I have not seen her for about a year it would not be possible for me to do so, but her face is rather a peculiar one and I am sure that I cannot be mistaken when I declare that it is my wife."

"Yes, but as I before remarked, mistakes in identifying the remains of dead people are made every day," the undertaker urged.

"You may not be aware of that fact but I am," the gentleman continued.

"Death gives a different appearance to the features, and on that account strange mistakes are made."

"Did your wife possess any peculiar marks by means of which you could identify her, supposing that her face was disfigured so that recognition by that means was not possible?"

"Oh, yes," Trevanion replied without the slightest hesitation.

"On her right foot is a slight malformation. The little toe is double, although it is but a little larger than the one on the left foot, but it looks as though two toes had grown together."

All the bystanders stared eagerly at the undertaker as the Englishman finished the sentence.

The gentleman nodded gravely.

"I am afraid, sir, that you have not made any mistake," the undertaker remarked in a solemn way.

"The woman possesses this extraordinary mark of which you speak, and so I presume there isn't any doubt that it is your wife."

"Oh, no, not the slightest!" Trevanion asserted. "I was sure of it the moment I looked at her face. It was not possible, you know, that I could make any mistake."

"I am glad the mystery is cleared up, although I deeply sympathize with you, sir, for I can fully understand how great a blow this must be to you."

"Ah, yes, poor Constance, I little expected when I parted from her that she was so soon to be called to an account!" the Englishman exclaimed, shaking his head in a mournful way.

The detectives exchanged glances when the name, Constance, reached their ears, for this was not the appellation which they expected to hear.

"Now, my dear sir, if you will oblige me with the particulars regarding your wife, her name, and anything you may know which you think will help to throw a light on this awful mystery," the undertaker remarked, again assuming a judicial air, taking out his note-book and pencil as he spoke.

"Really I cannot give you much information, you know," the Englishman responded. "But such as I have you are quite welcome to."

"My name is Lorraine Trevanion, born in London, England, but I have resided in this country for the past three years. I am in the theatrical business at present."

"I made the acquaintance of this unfortunate young woman about two years ago."

"She was an actress then, and engaged at the Paragon Theater in New York City; her name was Constance Blakeley, an orphan, without any relatives; in fact, she was a foundling, who never knew either her father or mother, but was reared by charity."

"A short time after I made her acquaintance she got an engagement in Chicago, and as business called me to that city we made the journey in company; after arriving in Chicago we boarded in the same house, and a month later we were married."

"We did not get on very well together, the trouble being that she wanted to keep on acting while I was desirous she should give up her stage life, as I wanted her to stay home and attend to domestic affairs."

"This she would not do, and so, finally, we separated."

"You understand, my dear sir, I have not any complaints to make of my wife excepting this one," the Englishman added.

"My idea was that after an actress got married she ought to leave the stage and settle down if her husband was able and willing to support her, as I certainly was, but she thought differently, and then the idea came to me that if I was to leave her to her own devices for a while, possibly, in order to get me back, she would agree to do as I wished, and that is why I left her."

"Ah, yes, I understand," the undertaker remarked, with a wise look. "And as I before remarked, I deeply sympathize with you in your unfortunate bereavement, but it is the hand of fate which has stricken this cruel blow, and as Christian men we must dutifully submit to the inevitable."

This was the "stock" phrase of the undertaker, which he used constantly in his business.

"Oh, I shall try to bear up under it, of

course," Trevanion responded with a mournful shake of the head.

"It is an awful blow, though, and coming so unexpectedly makes it worse."

"Yes, that is very true; it is like thunder from a clear sky."

"You are connected with this theatrical troupe, I presume?" the undertaker said.

"Oh, no."

"Ah, I got the impression that you were."

"No; I came here with the idea of joining the troupe, but the position which is open is not one that I desire, so the negotiations fell through," Trevanion explained.

"Yes, I understand," the undertaker observed. "I made the mistake from seeing you here with this gentleman, who is the manager of the troupe," and he nodded to the Jew, who immediately swelled up and looked around with an important air.

"No, I hoped to secure an engagement, and that is how I happened to come to Tarrytown at this time, but the circumstances are such that I cannot make any arrangements."

"I asked the question because the coroner's inquest will be held in an hour or so—in fact, I expect the doctors to make the *post mortem* examination every moment, and as soon as they conclude their investigation, the coroner will begin his inquiry into the cause of the death, and it is important under the circumstances to secure your evidence."

"Oh, I shall remain in town, of course!" the Englishman declared.

"I shall stay here until the sad affair is ended. I should like you to attend to the funeral, and as I haven't any cemetery plot, being a stranger in this country, as I explained, I will thank you to secure me a lot in your burial ground here; I will defray all the expenses, of course."

Then Trevanion produced his wallet, took out a large roll of bank-bills, the sight of which made the loungers gaze with wonder, and handed the undertaker two fifty-dollar bills.

"Here is a hundred to begin on, and if that will not cover the expense, just let me know, and I will attend to it."

"I want everything nice and neat, nothing elaborate or gaudy, you know," the Englishman explained.

The production of the money produced an impression upon the undertaker, as well as on the loungers, and he was rather astonished by the proceeding too, for as far as his experience went with the theater people, none of them that ever came to Tarrytown seemed to be overburdened with wealth.

In fact, it was an open secret in the town that the majority of the shows who came to entertain the Tarrytowners usually had hard work to get money enough together to pay their bills and get on to their next stand.

Hence it followed that this display of cash by a man who claimed to be in the theatrical business astonished the natives.

"Really, sir, it isn't necessary for you to pay in advance, Mr. Trevanion," the undertaker remarked, putting an extra touch of respect into his tone.

"The word of a gentleman, like yourself, is quite sufficient."

"Well, but I am a stranger, you know, and as you don't know anything about me you had better take the cash," the Englishman argued.

"It makes no difference to me, you know, whether I pay first or last."

"Well, if you desire it," the undertaker observed.

"I do, certainly," Trevanion remarked, as he placed the bills in the undertaker's hand.

"When the coroner arrives, and my presence is desired, if you will kindly send a message to the hotel I will come at once, and be much obliged to you."

"Of course! I will be glad to accommodate you," the undertaker responded.

Then he exchanged ceremonious bows with the Englishman who withdrew with his companions.

Upon no man in the room had the production of the money had more effect than the Jew manager of the traveling troupe.

He could hardly wait until he got into the street before he referred to the subject.

"Mine goot fr'en, you are well beeled!" he exclaimed, using the current slang of the day.

"Oh, yes; I have enough cash to get along with in comfort," Trevanion answered, carelessly.

"Why then did you say dot you could not go in mit me when I said I wanted a treasurer who would buy an interest in der show?" Cohen exclaimed, in a reproachful tone.

"Because I don't want to buy an interest," the Englishman replied.

"That is just what I told you in the beginning. If I wanted to invest money in the show business, I would take out a show of my own, so I could be the boss."

"Ah, but mine goot fr'en, you do not understand der business as I do," the wily Jew urged.

"Think how many years I have been in dot t'ing!"

"Mine gootness! If I had just a leetle capital to back me I would make t'ings hum!"

"Oh, yes, that is what every manager declares!" Trevanion responded, in a very incredulous way.

"Not a solitary man but thinks he could make a mint of money if he only had a little more cash so as to be able to run in better style."

"Ah, but dere ish no doubt dot I could do der trick if I had der monish!" Cohen asserted, positively.

"That is what every man-jack of them thinks, as I said, but as far as I am concerned, I do not care to go into any speculation of the kind."

"I wouldn't mind taking a position to sell tickets, and look after the money at a moderate salary," he added.

"You understand, I am doing it more for the fun of the thing—as a sort of lark, than anything else," Trevanion explained.

"I am fond of traveling, and I wouldn't mind going around, so as to have a chance to see the country, but I would want my expenses paid, and enough cash besides to do me for spending-money."

"If those conditions were complied with, I think I would have quite a jolly time."

"Ah, yesh, but I can not afford to do dot. It is a man with monish dot I want."

"Well, as you Americans say, we can not make a trade, nohow!" the Englishman declared, in a decisive way.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JEW'S IDEA.

THE Jew manager shook his head and assumed a mournful look.

He was exceedingly distressed by the situation.

Here was a man with two or three hundred dollars in his pocket—possibly four or five—the Jew had gazed at the roll of bills in the most searching manner when the Englishman produced them, and as he saw there was another fifty dollar note under the two which Trevanion had taken off he jumped to the conclusion that there was all the way from two to five hundred dollars in the roll; a man with a goodly store of wealth, and who wanted to go with a show, and yet could not be induced to put up any money.

It was truly aggravating.

The manager was really though a man of genius in a certain way, and while he was worrying over his ill-success a brilliant idea came to him.

"I tells you what it is, mine frien', since you will not buy an interest in de show, which would be certain to put much monish both in your pocket and in mine—"

"That is all right, but I am not investing any money in the show business just now!" Trevanion interrupted.

"Yesh, yesh, I understand dot!" the Jew cried, impatiently.

"Do not trouble yourself about dot! I am one of de mans who can take no for an answer when I see dot the party means business."

"I do, and you can depend upon it!"

"Oh, yesh, I understand. Well, what I was going to say was dot a good idea has come to me."

"You want to hold right onto it then, for good ideas are scarce!" the Englishman declared in a cynical way.

"I know dot, mine frien'," the Jew responded.

"Now my idea is, dere will be a deal of interest in dis t'ing, der room will be crowded when the inquest takes place."

"Undoubtedly! It is not often that these countrymen get a chance at a free show of this kind, and you can rely upon it that they will not fail to improve the opportunity."

"All der people will not be able to get in," continued the Jew, with an eager look in his eyes.

"That goes without saying!" Trevanion declared.

"Not more than twenty or thirty people can get inside the doors, and the chances are great that two or three hundred will want to attend."

"Exactly, and dot ish just what I am figuring on!" the manager proclaimed.

"Now here ish my idea," he continued. "Suppose I hire you to appear at der Opera House to-night, and, between der acts of der play, give a full account of der sad affair?"

"Your testimony at der inquest will be der important t'ing, of course; der rest will not amount to much, and you can give an account of der whole affair."

"Oh, make a Dime Museum show out of me!" exclaimed Trevanion, with a wry face.

"It will create der biggest kind of a sensation!" the wily Jew declared, rubbing his hands together briskly, while the baleful gleam of speculation shone in his eyes.

"I shouldn't be surprised," the Englishman observed, dryly.

"I will do der fair t'ing by you. I will gife as much as ten dollars if you will do der trick!" and as he made the announcement, Cohen looked at the Englishman with eager eyes, apixus to see how he took the offer.

Trevanion shook his head.

"Mine gootness! ish not ten dollars enough

for a few minutes' talk?" the Jew asked in amazement.

"Do you not know dot dere is plenty of men who would be glad to work a whole week for ten dollars?"

"Oh, yes, and plenty for five and six too, if you come to that," the Englishman responded.

"But I am not one of your ten-dollar men, you know."

"I will strain a point!" the manager exclaimed. "I will say fifteen, and then, so help me goodness! I am giving you all der profits!"

"Oh, no, fifteen will not do."

"Mine gracious goodness!" fairly yelled the disappointed Jew, "what do you want—der earth?"

"Yes, or a big slice of it, anyway!" Trevanion responded in a jeering way.

"Will you take twenty?" cried Cohen, angrily. "And so help me Isaac and Abraham! I will not give a single cent more."

"You wouldn't go twenty dollars and fifty cents?" Trevanion responded, with a grave face.

"No, I would not," the wily Jew snarled.

"What ish der matter mit you? Why do you want to stick me fifty cents more? Mine goodness! have you no conscience? In all my born days never did I meet mit a man so hard to do business mit. You want der whole butt end of der trade!"

"Oh, I was only joking with you, I would not stand and higgie for fifty cents," the Englishman remarked, in a contemptuous way.

"Dot ish right—dot ish de way to do business!" the manager declared.

"Live and let live! Dot was the true policy, mine fr'en!" he announced, with the air of an oracle.

"Oh, yes, you are right there; that is just the way we ought to play the game."

"Let me see!" the Jew remarked, reflectively. "I must me some 'dodgers' get out. Dey ought to be ready so ash to gife to der people when dey come to the inquest, but dere will be trouble about dot for sure; these country printing-offices are no good for quick work."

"Don't go ahead so fast," Trevanion remarked. "You are laboring under a slight mistake. I have not said that I would accept your offer."

"Mine goodness gracious!" exclaimed the Jew in exasperated astonishment. "Did you not say dot you would not stand on fifty cents?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I will gife you der fifty cents if it bu'sts der show up!" the manager exclaimed, angrily. "But you are the worst mans to do business mit dot I ever met, so help me Moses!"

"Oh, you have got the wrong idea, my friend," the Englishman responded, in a placid way. "It is not fifty cents that separates us, but a good many dollars."

"A good many dollars!" cried the Jew, in utter amazement.

"Yes; you see, my dear fellow, the fact is I am a gentleman born and bred, and although I may be rather wild, and altogether too fond of a mark for my own good, yet I am no Dime Museum freak by a long shot, and I would have to be pretty poorly off—very much reduced, you understand, absolutely in need of a square meal, as you Americans say, before I could bring myself to agree to go out on a platform and make a holy show of myself. Then, too, I fancy that nothing less than a hundred a night would be any temptation."

"A hundred dollars a night!" the Jew gasped.

"That is the figure," the Englishman replied, really enjoying the astonishment of the other.

"Oh, I could not give dot!" Cohen declared in deep disgust. "I might as well turn you loose in der box-office and say, 'here, mine fr'en', take all der monish dot comes in!"

"Yes, you are about right there," Trevanion admitted.

"But don't make any mistake about this matter, you know," the Englishman continued. "I am not asking you to give me any hundred dollars. Not at all! I would not take it if you were to make the offer, and stood ready to pay me the cash right in my hand."

"I am not in the market just now for anything in the Dime Museum line at any price!"

"Mine goodness! you must be one of der high rollers, eh?" Cohen exclaimed.

"Well, just at this present moment I am in pretty comfortable circumstances, and so can afford to be deuced independent."

By this time the party had arrived at the hotel and the conversation ended.

Trevanion took a seat in the office to await the arrival of the messenger, while the others went on to the Opera House.

The Jew manager was so disgusted by the failure to put into execution his brilliant idea that he could not refrain from talking to the greenhorn, young Timkins, about the matter.

"Dot mans must be out of his mind!" he declared with a weighty shake of the head.

"Just think of it! He turns up his nose at twenty dollars and fifty-cents a night!"

"Mine goodness gracious! never did I hear of such a t'ing."

"Dot mans has got more monish dan brains, dot ish a sure enough fact!" the Jew declared in conclusion.

CHAPTER X. THE INQUEST.

If the village loungers were surprised by the unexpected disclosure made by the Englishman the two detectives were even more amazed.

And when the men surged out of the rear apartment to gaze after Trevanion, as he proceeded up the street with his companions, the pair improved the opportunity to take another look at the body.

The undertaker was holding an earnest conversation with one of the village constables, a short, thick-set man with a stolid face, and the expression upon his features plainly showed that he was an ignorant, dull-minded fellow.

He had accosted the undertaker and drew him into a corner in a very mysterious way the moment Trevanion departed.

"Look a-berre, Mr. Beacham, don't you think I had better keep my eyes on this English chap so as to be ready to arrest him if he attempts to cut and run?" he asked.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the undertaker, in astonishment. "What do you want to do that for, and what charge would you bring against him?"

"Don't you kinder think that he had something to do with this gal's death?" the constable asked in a mysterious whisper.

"Well, no, I can't say that I do," the other replied. "In the first place there is no evidence as yet, that the woman came to her death by foul means. It seems to be a case of drowning, pure and simple, but whether she got into the water by accident, and was unable to get out, or threw herself in with the deliberate intention of committing suicide, is a mystery which I am afraid we will not be able to solve."

"I can't git the idee out of my mind that this chap don't know somethin' 'bout it!" the constable declared in a dogged way.

"Didn't he say he was a-separated from her, and, mebbe, he wanted to git rid of her, you know, and so chucked her into the water?"

"Well, it is possible, of course, but I don't think that it is probable."

"I'll keep an eye on him all the same!" the constable declared, and then he marched off with the air of a man who had the weight of an empire on his shoulders.

This conversation gave the two detectives an opportunity to examine the body without attracting notice.

"It certainly seems like the face of Mignon Lawrence!" Joe Phenix declared.

"It is somewhat altered since I last saw it, but then it is nearly a year since I met the girl, and death, of course, has made some changes, but if this is not Mignon then it's a girl who in life must have looked enough like her to have been her twin sister."

"But if it is Mignon Lawrence why has the Englishman identified it as being the body of another woman?"

"I am utterly in the dark as to his motive," Joe Phenix replied.

"It seems to me that his story in regard to marrying Constance Blakeley in Chicago must be true," he continued, musingly. "He would hardly dare to give such a story out, knowing that it would surely be published in the newspapers far and wide, if it was false, for there must be plenty of theatrical people in Chicago who would be apt to know all about the matter."

"The fellow had two wives then in rapid succession?"

"Yes, apparently. When he deserted Mignon he went off with an actress, who had been in the same company with his wife, and he announced his intention of marrying her as soon as he could get a divorce so as to be free to do so, and if his story of to-day is correct this is the woman for whose sake he deserted his wife, but it seems to me it can hardly be possible for the two women to have borne so great a resemblance to each other."

"If it is the case it is a mighty odd circumstance," Tony Western asserted.

"There is something wrong about the matter, somewhere!" Joe Phenix declared. "I am certain of it, although at present I am perplexed as to the game which the Englishman is playing, but I am sure it is a deep one."

"If this is the body of the first wife why has he declared it to be the remains of the second?"

"That is a riddle which can not be solved at present. It may be, you know, there is some life insurance game in it," Tony Western observed in a reflective way.

"That is an old swindle, often tried, and often successful," Joe Phenix remarked.

"If the two women did bear a strong resemblance to each other, he may have put a heavy life insurance on the second wife, and then by the aid of confederates had the first wife, whom he hated, killed, so he could swear it was the body of the other woman, and thus be enabled to collect the insurance money," Tony Western suggested.

"Well, it may be possible that the man is trying to work some scheme of the kind, but, some way, I am rather inclined to doubt it," the great detective observed.

"However we will keep our eyes open, and unless this fellow is a deal sharper than the

ordinary run of rascals, we will nail him in the end."

The two detectives were interrupted in their conversation at this point, by the arrival of the coroner, accompanied by the two doctors who were to make the *post mortem* examination.

All the men in the shop were unceremoniously turned out while the doctors, with closed doors, proceeded to perform their task.

When it was completed the doors were again thrown open, and the coroner, after getting a jury together, announced that he was ready to begin the inquest.

A messenger had been dispatched for the Englishman, and he came at once.

As it happened the coroner was a plain, straightforward business man, who knew his duties, and went to work in the right way.

First he called for the witness who had discovered the body, then when he had told how he happened to find it, the men were summoned whom he called upon for aid, and who helped to carry the body to the undertaker's shop.

Then the doctors gave their evidence.

To sum the matter up in a few words:

The body was found on some rocks on the shore, where it had evidently been washed by the tide, as it was low water at the time the remains were found.

There were no marks of violence on the body, except a slight discoloration on the throat, and some bruises on the face, which were accounted for by the position, hanging on the rocks, in which the body was found.

It was at first supposed that the woman was penniless, but a careful examination disclosed a dollar-bill crumpled up in one of the pockets.

The medical examination showed that she had come to her death by drowning, so the theory, which had been started by some wiseacre, that the woman had first been murdered, and then cast into the river was knocked into the head.

The mystery as to how the woman came to Tarrytown was not solved, for no one came forward to testify in regard to seeing her, but this was accounted for by supposing that she had come in the night by one of the late trains at a time when few people were abroad, and in the darkness a stranger would not attract the notice which would certainly follow an appearance by day.

Trevanion's testimony was given last.

The Englishman told the same plain, straightforward story which he had related to the undertaker, and his evidence made a favorable impression.

Even the loungers, and the village constable, who had been inclined to look with suspicion upon the man, now came to the conclusion that he was all right.

As the woman had not met with foul play but died an accidental death, it was plain that he could not have had a hand in the matter.

There had been no murder and consequently no murderer.

The jury were not long in deciding upon their verdict, which was that the woman had come to her death by drowning, but whether she had got into the water by accident or design they were not able to determine.

The body was buried that afternoon, and Trevanion departed, but he left his address with the coroner and the undertaker.

"If anything should happen to throw any light upon this mystery I will be much obliged if you will notify me," he said.

"I cannot understand why my wife should come to Tarrytown, and can only account for the affair by supposing her to be a little out of her mind, and so she wandered away heedless of where she went."

The gentlemen agreed that this was the possible solution of the mystery and there the matter rested.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DETECTIVE'S DETERMINATION.

ON the same train with the Englishman went the two detectives.

As there was considerable of a throng at the station the pair were able to get on board of the train without attracting Trevanion's notice.

The man-hunters had managed to keep their eyes upon the Englishman, although remaining well in the background, and they noticed that the man kept a wary watch upon all who came near him.

Joe Phenix called his assistant's attention to this circumstance.

"Yes, I tumbled to the fact that he was on the watch," Tony Western responded.

"What does it mean?"

"Why, the man is afraid that some one is playing the spy upon him."

"Exactly! but if he is not up to some game it would not matter a straw to him whether he was watched by a dozen men or not."

"That is true."

"So far, everything has been apparently open and aboveboard; there has not been anything about the affair to cause the slightest suspicion to attach to any one."

"Correct!"

"He has evidently jumped to the conclusion that there are detectives in the town," Joe Phenix asserted.

"And that thought is right too," Tony Western remarked.

"I have spotted two of the Headquarters detectives, and three private fellows, who evidently came up in the hope that this would turn out to be a murder case."

"Yes, I noticed all of them. If it had proved to be a murder the town would, undoubtedly, have offered a reward, and then these private detectives would have tried for it, but the jury's verdict settled that."

"Certainly, and the Englishman hasn't anything to fear as far as these men are concerned," Tony Western observed.

"If there isn't any money in a case, they wouldn't touch it with a forty foot pole!"

"That is so, and as far as the world at large is concerned the case is settled now."

"The woman is dead and buried; the coroner's jury has declared that she came to her death by natural causes—that no one had any hand in the affair—and therefore this Englishman need not trouble himself as to whether any one is paying any attention to his movements or not."

"Yes, but he evidently is troubling himself that way," the other asserted.

"Certainly, there isn't any doubt about it in my mind, and as I feel quite sure from what little I know of this Trevanion that he is an amazingly sharp fellow, I am forced to come to the conclusion that he is up to some game, or else he would not care whether any detectives had their eyes on him or not."

"It is a blunder on his part, of course, for him to act in such a way, and so excite suspicion when, apparently, there isn't any reason for any being raised."

"But the sharpest of scheming rascals will make just such mistakes, and if they did not it would be next to impossible for the man-hunters to catch them as often as they do."

"It is the old story, 'the thief doth fear each bush an officer,' and so is ready to start at shadows."

"Well, one thing about the case is certain, and that is you have been able to guess the game the Englishman would play right from the beginning."

"Yes, things have turned out exactly as I thought they would, with the single exception that I was all at sea in regard to the girl's identity, as I was sure it was Mignon Lawrence, and it was a complete surprise to me when Trevanion declared that it was his second wife."

"He came here on purpose to identify the lady, and arranged the matter so it would look as if it was purely accidental, and that shows he knew the body was here, and so the presumption arises that there has been foul play about the matter."

"Exactly! and if there has been foul play the crime was not committed without some weighty reason, for the Englishman is too smart a rascal to run any risk without there is a chance for him to make money out of the thing," Tony Western observed.

"Now then, there is only one way to proceed. We must 'shadow' Trevanion and do it so skillfully that he will not suspect that aught is amiss. It will not be an easy job but we must do it."

And it was with this determination that the two boarded the train.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PURSUIT.

WHEN the train arrived at the Grand Central Depot in New York City, the two detectives, who sat in the front part of the smoking-car, were among the first to alight, and they hurried to the street like men who had an important business appointment to keep.

Joe Phenix had arranged his plan of action on the way down.

He had not been able to overhear the address which Trevanion had given in Tarrytown, for it was not his game to allow the man to perceive that he was at all anxious about him, and so he was desirous of ascertaining where he lived in the city.

Western lost himself in the crowd in the waiting room, so as to be prepared to follow Trevanion if he proceeded on foot, but it was Joe Phenix's idea that Trevanion, being an Englishman, and therefore partial to cabs, would go in one.

And as soon as the great detective gained the street, he proceeded to where the cabmen were drawn up in line.

The first one was an old acquaintance, and greeted the detective in the most cordial manner, for Joe Phenix had often employed him in difficult jobs, and he understood that when he had the detective for a passenger, he was sure of liberal pay.

"Do you want a cab, sir?" he asked.

"Yes; I have a little game on foot," Phenix replied, hurriedly, and in a cautious tone.

"There is a man coming whom I want to follow if he takes a cab, as I think he will. He is an Englishman, blonde, with small mutton-chop whiskers, light overcoat, silk hat."

"If you don't succeed in spotting him, I will point him out."

"All right, sir."

Phenix then got into the cab, and the driver mounted to the box.

Just as this movement was accomplished, Trevanion came down the depot steps.

He had been one of the last to leave the train. Being anxious to see if there was any spy upon his track, he had loitered behind and allowed the rest of the passengers to precede him.

By this maneuver he made it impossible for any spy to remain in his rear.

If he was being shadowed, the man who was doing the job must go on ahead, and then lay in wait for him, and the Englishman flattered himself that he would be shrewd enough to detect the watcher if any one attempted to play a trick of this kind on him.

Tony Western had been detailed for this duty, but he kept back, well out of sight, as the Englishman passed through the room, then he advanced to one of the windows, and through it watched Trevanion as he came upon the street.

Half-way across the sidewalk the Englishman cast a quick glance over his shoulder toward the steps, which he had just descended, his idea being to see if any suspicious-looking men had their eyes on him.

But there wasn't anything about the passengers, lounging on the steps, or hurrying in or out of the building, to excite his attention.

Tony Western, looking out of the window, concealed behind two ladies, did not attract his notice.

Satisfied that there were no spies on his track, Trevanion took the second cab in the line, the one next to the vehicle in which Joe Phenix was seated, gave his address to the driver, got in and was driven off.

The driver of Phenix's cab pretended to be very busy fixing his reins, which he had unbuckled, but he had his eyes on the Englishman, and after the cab in which Trevanion was seated started off he called to the detective:

"That feller who took the next cab was the one, hey?"

"Yes, and it will be five dollars in your pocket if you can manage to follow him without his detecting what you are up to!" Joe Phenix declared.

"That five dollars is as good as mine already, unless this chap is a fortune-teller and able to smell out that a man is on his track, even if he can't see him!" the cabman declared.

Then off he drove in chase of the vehicle. As it proved, the job was not a difficult one, for the cab containing the Englishman went through Forty-second street to Sixth avenue, then turned and went down the avenue and kept on until one of the small cross streets was reached, just below the junction of Sixth avenue and Broadway, into which it turned, and at a modest three-storied, old-fashioned, brick house, two doors from the corner, the cab halted.

As the avenue was well filled with all sorts of vehicles, it was an easy matter for Phenix's cabman to follow the other cab without coming close enough to excite suspicion in either the Englishman's or the driver's mind, if the pair had been on the watch.

The detective's driver halted his cab just below the cross street and notified Phenix that by looking through the window in the back of the vehicle he could get a view of the other cab.

The cabman had arranged the matter so that if the Englishman had taken a survey of the surroundings, all he could see was an apparently empty cab drawn up by the curbstone, with the driver busily engaged in fixing the harness.

Trevanion did cast a searching glance around as he alighted, but cunning as was the Englishman, his suspicions were not aroused by the sight of the cab on Sixth avenue.

He paid his cabman and entered the house.

Phenix had kept his eyes on him, keeping well back from the window though, so his face could not be seen, and he was not long in coming to a determination in regard to the best course to pursue.

There was a bill on the house, and the detective, from the appearance of the dwelling, came to the conclusion that it was rented out in either apartments or furnished rooms.

"If this is the case," he mused, "there ought not to be much difficulty in finding out all that the people in the house know of this gentleman, and though I do not count much on gaining information which will be of any particular value in that way, still it may be of advantage to me to find out what he is representing himself to be."

"Owing to the peculiar circumstances I can probably arrange matters so as to keep a watch upon him by taking a room in the house, therefore I will have to assume a disguise, and the quicker I get at it the better."

Having come to this conclusion, Phenix ordered the cabman to drive him to Third avenue and Fourteenth street, this point being but a few blocks from the house of the detective.

It was the detective's policy never to allow any one to know where he lived, for it was his belief that the more a man-hunter kept himself in the background, the better would be his opportunities for doing effective work.

When Phenix arrived at his destination he paid the cabman and dismissed him, then pro-

ceeded to his residence, where he found Tony Western awaiting him.

Phenix explained what he was about to do, and then suggested that his assistant might be able to gain some information in regard to the Englishman from some of the stool-pigeons who were in the habit of associating with the crooked men of the metropolis.

"Stool-pigeon" is a police name for people who have been in "trouble," and after getting out of it, act as spies upon their associates, betraying to the authorities any plans or plots of the crooks which may happen to come to their knowledge.

Tony Western departed, and then Phenix proceeded to disguise himself.

When he made his appearance on the street his most intimate friend would never have recognized him.

He was now a gray-haired man, apparently sixty-five or seventy years old, wearing glasses, and in his well-worn suit of black looked like a school teacher or some kind of a professional man; one who was beginning to feel the effect of age, for he seemed to need the aid of the cane which he carried.

The house of the detective was within a block of Third avenue, and when he reached that thoroughfare he proceeded up it until he came to Fourteenth street, and there he took one of the cross-town cars which carried him to Sixth avenue and thirty-fourth street, where he got off.

As he gained the curbstone his attention was attracted to a sharp-faced, keen-eyed boy of fourteen or thereabouts who was looking in a shop window and whistling softly to himself.

He at once accosted the lad.

"What are you doing here, Petey?" he asked.

The boy turned and surveyed the disguised detective in an inquisitive way for a moment.

"Boss, I reckon you have got a heap the best of me, for I don't remember as I ever see'd you afore, although you kin call me by name so handy!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, I am an old acquaintance of yours," the detective replied. "But what are you doing up here? why ain't you down town in the office?" You are still at the same place, I presume, that you went to after you got through with Englebert?"

"No, I am out of a job just now; the broker, who was my boss, died last week, and I haven't struck anything since, but I am on the lookout all the time."

"I s'pose though I am going to have a mighty hard job in gitting in anywhere, 'cos I ain't got no recommends," the boy continued with the air of a sage.

"You see, the broker died suddenly so I didn't git none from him, and when I went to see young Englebert, thinking I might git him to gi'n me a line, I found dat all of dem had dusted off to England, and so I got badly left, see?"

"That was unfortunate."

"Say! who are you, anyway?" the boy exclaimed, suddenly. "It 'pears to me dat I have see'd you afore, but I will be blamed if I kin remember the rights of it, and dat is all dead wrong, you know!" the gamin declared in a most serious manner.

"Oh, I am an old acquaintance," the disguised detective replied.

"Dat is what I think!" the boy exclaimed. "I'll take my oath dat I have heard yer chin-music afore, but I'm giving it to you on the dead straight when I say dat I dunno who you are."

"I am the man who got you into Englebert's office."

The boy gave a low whistle of astonishment.

"I wish I may die if I caught onto yer!" he declared.

"Say, boss, dis yer' get-up jist rakes the deck! Blamed if I would have known you if I had fell over yer!"

"How would you like to do another bit of work for me?"

"How would I like to do it?" the boy exclaimed. "Why, boss, I would be willing to jist jump clean out of my skin for joy!"

"I think I can give you a chance," the disguised detective remarked.

"Wait on the next corner below for me. I have a little business down the street to which I must attend. It will not, probably, detain me over fifteen or twenty minutes, and then I will be back."

The boy said he would wait and Phenix went on.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT PHENIX LEARNED.

JOE PHENIX proceeded directly to the house where the Englishman had taken up his quarters.

He read the small sign by the door, which announced that apartments could be procured within, and then carefully examined the front of the house, as though he believed he could determine from the exterior what the inside was like.

Then he nodded his head in an approving way, as though he was pleased with the inspection.

He had caught a glimpse of an old white-

bearded man watching him from one of the second-story windows, and came to the conclusion from the way in which the old gentleman looked at him that it was likely he was the one who attended to the renting of the apartments.

When his ring at the door-bell was answered he found that this conjecture was true, for it was the old gentleman who came to the door.

The disguised detective explained that he was in search of apartments.

"We have two vacant," the landlord replied. "One on the first floor and one on the third. How many rooms do you require?"

"Well, about three. I have no family, only a couple of nephews, who stop with me when they are in the city; they are commercial travelers, and so are absent the greater part of the time. I am an author, myself, and so wish to secure nice, quiet apartments," Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"I think I can suit you," the landlord remarked.

"I have three rooms here on the first floor; they are in the rear of the house, and so are very quiet and retired."

"I should think that would do very nicely. There is another family on the floor, I presume?"

"Not exactly a family—a single gentleman only, who keeps bachelor's hall in the two front rooms. A very quiet gentleman—an Englishman, Mr. Trevanion, who is an artist, and as far as he is concerned, if you take the rooms which are in the rear of his, you would never know that he was in the house."

It struck the disguised detective as being a piece of rare good luck to be able to secure so advantageous a position, and he said he would take a look at the apartments as he thought they would be likely to suit.

"I used to rent all the five rooms together," the landlord explained. "But in order to do so I was obliged to admit a family, and as I would rather not take children I divided the rooms into two sets of apartments."

"A very good idea it seems to me," the disguised detective remarked.

The rooms were good—one large apartment and two bedrooms—the rent reasonable, and the man-hunter engaged them, paying a month's rent on the spot.

Then he called the landlord's attention to a door which was in the inner bedroom.

"That leads to the front room," the old gentleman explained. "And when I decided to divide the apartments I locked the door and took the key out so that neither tenant can trouble the other."

"Ah, yes, I see. This, by the way, is my first experience in keeping house in New York, as I have always boarded, so I will have to go and see about some furniture."

"I can recommend a house which will attend to the business in fine style," the old gentleman said. "They will find everything you require at a very reasonable rate, and in a few hours after you give the order will send their men and arrange the apartments so all you will have to do is to walk in and take possession."

"That is excellent!" the disguised detective declared, making a note of the address, and then he took his departure.

Joe Phenix was well satisfied with the way that things were going.

"That door which connects the two sets of apartments ought to prove extremely serviceable to me," the man-hunter mused as he proceeded toward the avenue.

"By it I will be able to gain access to the front apartments in the absence of the crooks unless they have taken the precaution to put bolts on their side of the door, and it is not likely that they would trouble themselves to do anything of the sort, unless they are men possessed of a wonderful amount of forethought, for it would take a man with a great head indeed to arrive at the conclusion that there was danger of some one in the rear apartment playing the spy."

At the corner of the street the detective encountered the boy.

The furniture company, whose address the landlord had given to the detective, was located in Eighth avenue, some distance away, and so Joe Phenix hailed a cab in order to proceed there.

"Jump in, Petey," he said, as he opened the door of the vehicle.

The boy obeyed, then the man-hunter entered, and away the cab went.

"I have taken a survey of the ground," Joe Phenix began after the cab started. "And I can tell you just about how I want the game worked."

"All right, boss, jest you let me know w'ot you want me to do, and you kin bet all yer stamps dat I will do my best to work der racket to der queen's taste!" the boy exclaimed, emphatically.

The detective then explained how he had taken rooms in the house, and gave a description of the man upon whom he wanted the boy to play the spy.

"Dat is all right, boss!" the boy exclaimed. "If I see'd a feller like dat coming out of the house you kin bet yer sweet life dat I will do the shadow act, right up prime!"

"You must be particular not to let him catch you playing the spy upon him."

"How is der bloke—pretty sharp?" the boy asked, with a cunning look upon his pinched features.

"Yes, he isn't anybody's fool."

"I will have to keep my eyes peeled then, I s'pose, or else he will catch onto me."

"You certainly will have to use an extra amount of caution."

"He is a sly duck, hey?"

"I think so from what I have seen of him," the detective replied. "And if he once got the idea into his head that somebody has put a watch on him, all the fat would be in the fire."

"I will have to be mighty keeful then!" the boy declared, with a wise look.

"Yes, it is important for me to find out where he goes, and, particularly, what kind of people he associates with."

"I will 'pipe' him off, boss, in furst-class style!" the lad exclaimed.

"It is a fortunate thing that the house is situated so near the avenue," the detective observed.

"Yes, that is so; there is always plenty of people passing up and down, and changing around der corner, so dat a kid of my size won't be likely fer to be noticed."

"Let me see," Joe Phenix remarked, reflectively. "I think that you had better turn yourself into a newsboy, or a bootblack, so as to have a good excuse for lounging around the corner."

"I kin work both games!" the other declared, in a tone full of confidence.

"I will go down to me aunt's and put on me old togs, den I'll git de bootblack, and when I ain't selling papers I kin come der bootblack act on der corner."

"Yes, and that will give me an opportunity to communicate with you, if it is necessary for me to do so."

"Cert!" the boy exclaimed. "You kin stop and git yer boots blacked, and if I chin to you a little while, der work is going on, nobody will think there is anything wrong about it."

"It will do very nicely; but bear in mind my warning; do not do anything to excite the Englishman's suspicions."

"You kin bet yer sweet life dat I will be keeful!" the boy exclaimed. "I ain't been knocking 'round the streets of New York all my life without having a heap of sense beat inter me."

"I know that you are a cunning fellow, but this is an extra difficult case, and so I wanted to warn you to use all possible caution."

"Dat is all right!" the youth declared in his wise, old-manish way.

"It is allers best to give it to a cove straight as you kin, 'cos then he knows w'ot to expect."

"I say, boss," added the boy, abruptly, "do you think this bloke will be on der watch for to see whether anybody is playing der shadow act on him or not?"

"No, I do not think he has any suspicion that anybody will try such a game on him," the man-hunter answered.

"Dat's good!" the boy cried. "Dat gives me a better chance?"

"Yes, but as the man is a deep and wily rascal—one of the kind to whom precaution has become a second nature, it is very likely that he will keep an extremely good lookout, not because he thinks there is any danger of anybody shadowing him, but as it is a common thing for him to be on his guard."

"I twigs, boss, and you kin bet yer boots dat I will play the safest kind of a game."

"That is wise; do not throw a chance away."

"Oh, no, I ain't dat kind of a honey-cooler."

"Is dat all you want to say, boss?" he added. "Nuffin more?"

"No, that is all."

"If you will stop dis yer' chariot, and let me out, I will skip right down-town by de L., so as to git inter my old togs, and, mebbe, I kin git back to de corner 'bout as soon as you will."

"All right! the quicker you are on post, ready to do business, the better."

So the detective hailed the cabman, the vehicle came to a halt, and the boy departed, starting off in a way which plainly showed his heart was in his work.

Joe Phenix watched him run up the steps of the Elevated Railway station as the cab went on its way.

"He is a bright lad," the detective commented.

"Now then I have three extra good specials engaged on this case, and it will be strange indeed if I do not succeed in getting at the truth."

The man-hunter was not detained long at the furniture store, for he found them used to attending to matters of the kind, and they said the articles would be delivered that night.

A man who pays the cash on the nail in New York seldom has to complain of delay.

Back again to the house went Joe Phenix in order to tell the landlord that the goods would be delivered that night.

"I will attend to them," the old gentleman declared. "And you will undoubtedly find everything in readiness when you come."

The disguised detective thanked the landlord for his kindness in suitable terms and then he departed, feeling well satisfied with the way affairs were progressing.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"CIRCUMSTANCES are favoring me, I think," Joe Phenix remarked as he proceeded down Broadway.

"I have secured a position from which I will be able to keep a good watch on the Englishman, and as soon as I discover who his associates are I may be able to make a shrewd guess as to what game he is trying to play."

"The chances, to my thinking, are about a hundred to one that he has associates, for no matter what the nature of the game may be which he is trying to play, it is undoubtedly a deep one, and it does not seem hardly possible to me that he would attempt to work the trick without help."

The detective was deeply interested in this matter, for he considered that in the Englishman he had met a foeman worthy of his steel, and there wasn't anything which delighted this indomitable man-hunter more than to get on the track of a really first-class rascal.

The greater the cunning of the game, the more difficult the task, the better this man—strange compound of ice and iron—liked it.

He disdained a victory which could be easily won.

"As the gamblers say, it seems to me that things are coming my way," the detective remarked as he came to a halt on the corner of Twenty-third street, the passage being blocked by vehicles.

As he waited on the curbstone a lady stopped by his side.

The disguised detective cast a careless glance at her and to his astonishment discovered that it was Mignon Lawrence.

Joe Phenix took a second glance in order to be certain that he was not deceived by some strange resemblance, for after seeing the body of the young actress extended upon the couch of death, as he firmly believed, it was a novel experience to come face to face with her in a crowded street.

Miss Lawrence noticed the strange way in which the detective was staring at her, and, not recognizing him in his disguise, drew herself up proudly.

"Am I mistaken in thinking you are Miss Mignon Lawrence?" Joe Phenix asked.

"That is my name, sir, but you have the advantage of me, I think," the lady replied in a distant way, fixing her keen eyes upon the face of the gentleman.

"I had forgotten for the moment that I do not look much like myself," the detective said with a quiet smile.

"I am Phenix," he continued.

The haughty expression upon the face of the girl vanished immediately, and she held out her hand.

"My dear Mr. Phenix, I am delighted to see you!" she exclaimed as she shook hands with him.

"It is not wonderful that I did not recognize you though, for as you appear at present you look like anything but yourself."

"I have not seen or heard of you for some time," the detective said.

"That is because I have been in England for nearly a year."

"Following your profession?"

"Yes; I went over with a burlesque party, but the speculation did not pay, and the troupe burst up in a month, but I was lucky enough to get an engagement with a solid company, engaged in touring the smaller provinces, and I stayed with them until I had seen about all of the country that was worth seeing, and then I became homesick, and so here I am."

"You have had quite a trip."

"Oh, yes, but I am glad enough to get home, I tell you!" the young actress exclaimed.

"They may talk of London as they please, but I like New York better, although I have been away for so long that I feel just like a stranger."

"I landed this afternoon, have taken a walk up Broadway, now I am going down again, and you are the first soul I have met who recognized me."

"So much the better!" the detective declared, to the surprise of the young actress.

"You don't understand, eh?" he continued, with a quiet smile.

"No, indeed, I do not!"

"Let me see," and the detective consulted his watch.

"Just five! Have you dined?"

"No, but I had a lunch on the steamer at twelve, and so have not been hungry."

"Suppose you take dinner with me," Joe Phenix suggested. "I have a little business to talk over with you, and if you accept the invitation, it will afford me an opportunity."

"I shall be delighted!" the young actress exclaimed, and the bright look upon her face plainly showed that she meant what she said.

"I have not forgotten my first little dinner with you," she continued.

"When I met you that day I do not believe there was a more heart-sick woman in New York than I was, and if any doctor had suggested that he could prescribe for me, I should have been inclined to put Macbeth's question to him, 'Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?'"

"Well, I succeeded in doing it, I believe," Joe Phenix remarked.

"You certainly did!" the girl declared with a laugh. "When I met you I was all ready to kill myself, but under your treatment my despondency was soon banished and I speedily came to the conclusion that life was indeed worth living."

"Under the circumstances then, you should not hesitate to accept my hospitality a second time," the detective remarked.

"Oh, I will gladly accept your invitation, although I am not in a state of mind at present to require a counselor."

"If you haven't any objections we will go to the same place on Fourth avenue, where we previously dined."

"Oh, no! If you had asked me I would have suggested it," Miss Lawrence replied.

"The cooking there is perfection itself, and the wine delicious!"

"Come along then!"

The two proceeded to the Italian restaurant, and as it was not far away they soon reached it.

There were only a few guests in the place when the two entered, for it was a Bohemian resort, where actors, artists, musicians, journalists, and the young bloods who delighted to call themselves "men-about-town," were wont to congregate, so that it was not until after the hours of darkness had set in that they made their appearance, but from ten until one o'clock the restaurant was always so crowded that it was difficult to get seats.

Joe Phenix selected a table in the further corner of the room, where they could converse without danger of their words being overheard.

"What would you like?" the detective asked.

"Oh, I will leave that entirely to you as I have ample confidence in your judgment," the young actress replied.

The gentleman gave the order for the repast and when the waiter departed, bought one of the evening newspapers from a boy who came in.

As he expected, it contained an account of the coroner's inquest in the Tarrytown case.

He glanced over it and then remarked to his companion:

"I do not suppose you have seen a newspaper since you landed?"

"No, and very few American newspapers came in my way in England, and as the English journals, as a rule, do not give much space to American affairs I am almost completely in the dark as to what has taken place in the States—as the English always say—during the past year."

"Here is something which I think will interest you," and Joe Phenix handing the newspaper to the girl, directed her attention to the "Tarrytown Mystery," as the account of the affair was headed in great, black letters.

Miss Lawrence perused the account with a great deal of interest, uttering a cry of surprise when she came to the mention of Lorraine Trevanion's name.

"By the time she came to the end of the article dinner was served and after uncorking the wine the waiter discreetly withdrew.

"Really this is so entirely unexpected that I hardly know what to make of it," the young actress remarked.

"Poor girl! what a dreadful fate," she continued.

"Is she the woman for whom your husband forsook you?"

"Yes, she is the actress with whom he went to Chicago, but he did not forsake me for her, because he liked her better, or anything of that sort."

"That husband of mine, you must understand, Mr. Phenix, is a regular scamp," she continued.

"He left me because he understood that he had come to the end of his rope; he had spent all my money, and he comprehended that I had got my eyes open as to the kind of man he was, and he knew he could not hope to get hold of much more of my cash. Then he was angry too because I pounded him when he undertook, by slapping my face, to show me how Englishmen regulated their wives."

"I humbled his pride when I convinced him that if it came to fisticuffs he stood no chance with me, and so, when an opportunity offered, he sought revenge by going away with another woman."

"I was terribly angry at first, not that I really cared for the man, but I was humiliated by being robbed and deserted, and it was enough to make almost any woman feel bad to be told by the man for whom she had done everything in

her power, that he was going to get a divorce from her for the express purpose of marrying somebody else."

"We will drink confusion to him!" Joe Phenix remarked, taking up his glass.

"With all my heart!" the young actress responded. "The miserable wretch! Just see how this affair has turned out! Possibly if poor Constance had not had anything to do with him she would have been alive to-day."

"I feel very sure of it," the detective responded quietly, yet with deep meaning in his tone.

The girl was quick of comprehension, and she understood what the detective's speech suggested.

"You think there has been foul play?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I feel pretty certain of it," Joe Phenix responded.

"But we are neglecting the dinner; let us eat and we can converse also."

"Oh, yes."

Then the detective helped the young actress to the viands, and the meal began, and while they were eating, Joe Phenix explained how, influenced by a dream, he had gone to Tarrytown.

"This is really marvelous!" Miss Lawrence declared.

"And it is just in a line too with what Shakespeare wrote, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than is dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"There are certainly a great many things which happen in this world for which no rational explanation can be found," Joe Phenix assented.

Then he related how, when he came to look upon the body of the dead woman, he believed he had recognized her features.

"I felt sure it was you, Miss Lawrence!" he declared.

CHAPTER XV.

A BARGAIN.

"WELL, that was quite a natural mistake," the young actress remarked.

"There was really a great resemblance between us; we had the same colored eyes and hair, and our features were much alike, excepting that her face was fuller than mine, but we had such a resemblance to each other that we have been taken for twin sisters by a great many people."

"It was not strange then that I made the mistake of thinking it was you."

"Oh, no; I have been taken for her and she for me by a great many people who were well acquainted with us both."

"Did you notice in the newspaper account how it was stated that Trevanion recognized his wife by a peculiar malformation of the little toe on the right foot?" the young actress continued.

"Yes."

"And now comes the strangest part of the whole affair!" Miss Lawrence declared. "I have just such a thing on my right foot."

"Well, that is odd!" Joe Phenix exclaimed.

"Isn't it? And I had no idea either that Constance was marked in that way."

"But Trevanion was probably aware of the fact that both of you bore the peculiar mark," the detective observed, in a thoughtful way.

"Well, he certainly knew that I had the double toe, and it is likely he was acquainted with the fact that Constance was also marked in that way."

"What sort of a girl was this Miss Blakeley?" Joe Phenix asked, reflectively.

"I don't know that I am capable of giving you correct information about that," the young actress replied, slowly.

"You see I may be a little prejudiced against her."

"Oh, I do not doubt but what you will give a fair account!" the detective declared.

"I will try to be fair," Miss Lawrence affirmed.

"Well, then, I will say that she was a girl I never really liked. She was of a jealous disposition, with a rather ugly temper, and inclined to be quarrelsome."

"We both joined the company the same week and were put in the same dressing-room, and a quarrel arose immediately in regard to the dressing-places; the theater rule is: first come, first served, and as I arrived in the dressing-room first at night, I picked out what was really the best place, as I had a perfect right to do."

"When Constance arrived I was half-dressed, and she found fault immediately, said she had come into the dressing-room, at rehearsal time and picked out that place, and added that if I didn't give it up I was no lady."

"As you know, Mr. Phenix, I am perfectly capable of taking my own part against the average man, to say nothing of the average woman, and knowing this I was disposed to be patient with the girl, so I replied quietly that I was not willing to accept her judgment as to whether I was a lady or not, but I certainly would not give up the dressing-place, and I would thank her to let me severely alone in the future."

"She immediately flew into a violent passion, declared she had a good mind to slap my face,

and made a motion with her hand as though to carry out the threat."

"I seized her at once by the wrists, backed her into a corner and sat her down in a chair with a force which brought the tears to her eyes."

"Then I released her wrists and 'squared off' at her in true boxing fashion."

"Do you want me to give you a pair of black eyes, so that you will not be able to go on the stage, or make your appearance in the street for a week?" I exclaimed. "For if you do I am just the kind of girl who can accommodate you!"

"She must have been greatly astonished!" Joe Phenix commented, with a smile.

"Yes, she was both astonished and frightened, for she wasn't anything but a female bully, without any pluck!" Miss Lawrence declared, in a contemptuous tone.

"She broke down at once, and began to cry, asked my pardon, and said she was too hasty and hoped I would forgive her."

"And so the storm blew over, eh?"

"Oh, yes, I am not the kind of girl to harbor malice for a little thing like that, particularly when I had all the best of it, and so we got along first rate after that."

"She pretended to think a great deal of me, and often said I was the best friend she had in the world, and I really believe the girl meant what she said, but after she ran away with my husband I began to think she never forgave me for humbling her pride, and had a secret longing to be revenged upon me all the time."

"Very likely. Such a woman as you have described her to be would be likely to cherish resentment for a long time."

"Now then, Miss Lawrence, I am going to confide to you that I have become greatly interested in this case, which was brought to my notice in such a strange manner," the great detective declared.

"And although I haven't anything in the world to go on but supposition, yet I have come to the conclusion there is something wrong about the affair, although the verdict of the coroner's jury was that the girl came to her death by natural means. I am satisfied from what I learned after the verdict was rendered that the majority of the jurors believed the girl committed suicide."

"You think that Trevanion had some guilty knowledge in regard to her death?"

"Yes, otherwise how could he have possibly known that the body was there?"

"True, very true," the girl remarked in a reflective way.

"Such a man as Trevanion, with plenty of money in his pocket, would never trouble himself to apply for a position of treasurer of a little traveling troupe."

"Oh, no! He was quite a gentleman, this dashing Englishman, and such an expert at billiards and cards that he could easily make in a night as much as a troupe of this kind could afford to pay him in a week."

"There was no doubt in my mind that his applying for the situation was simply a blind to account for his presence in the town."

"But what game is he trying to play?" the young actress asked.

"Ah, now you are putting a question which I am unable to answer, nor can I even make a guess in regard to it."

"I am working completely in the dark. All I can say is, that I am satisfied there is some mischief afoot, but I do not know what it is, for at present I cannot see what possible advantage it can be to the Englishman to have the girl out of this world rather than in it."

"Suppose her life was insured for a large amount?" the actress queried.

"Ah, yes, I understand what you mean," the detective replied.

"A trick of that kind has been worked successfully a number of times."

"A man or woman's life has been insured for a large amount, the plotters who placed the insurance calculating to kill the victim after a certain time and so secure the insurance money."

"That may be the game that this precious English rascal is calculating to play in this case," the young actress suggested.

"That idea occurred to me, but, somehow, I have got the notion into my head that in this case the plotters have got something new."

"You speak of plotters, and you believe, I suppose, that Trevanion has confederates."

"Oh, yes, no doubt about that in my mind," the detective replied.

"You see, Miss Lawrence, men in my line of business make a regular study of the different classes of criminals whom they are called upon to hunt down, just as a hunter studies the habits of the birds or animals whom he pursues."

"An experienced Nimrod does not expect to fall in with a flock of ducks on dry land, in the interior of the country, nor come across a herd of deer in the neighborhood of a thickly populated city."

"Certainly not!"

"And when he hunts bears he adopts different tactics to those which he employs when in chase of foxes or rabbits."

"Very true."

"And so we man-hunters divide our game into classes, for regular habitual law-breakers, as a rule, stick to one line."

"Sometimes, of course, there are universal geniuses, Jacks of all trades, who can with equal readiness turn their hands to anything, from a first-class bank robbery down to sneak-thieving from a tenement-house, but such men are few and far between."

"Yes, I should imagine so, from what I have read about the subject. Of my own knowledge, of course, I know nothing."

"Now this Englishman belongs to the class of gentle swindlers. He is not the man to resort to violence to gain money, and so in this case, if, as I suspect, this woman was murdered, you can depend upon it that Trevanion had an accomplice who did the work."

"The Englishman did not stain his hands in the blood of the victim, although it is likely that he arranged all the details of the scheme, but the actual work some one else performed."

"Well, I should not be surprised if that was the truth," Miss Lawrence remarked, in a reflective way.

"From what I know of the man, I should not think him to be one who could descend to murder, except it might be from a chance blow, struck in the heat of passion."

"If I am correct in my suspicion that there is a deep-laid scheme at the back of this matter, it is certain that Trevanion had a confederate, possibly a couple of them, who committed the actual crime, and on that fact I build my hopes of spoiling the game and catching the plotters."

"Oh, don't I wish I could help you!" the young actress exclaimed, enthusiastically.

"Wouldn't I like to have a chance to deal this one-time husband of mine a blow which would make him rue the hour that he ever made my acquaintance?"

"You can have the chance if you want it, for I need the services of just such a woman as you are," the great detective announced.

The eyes of the young actress sparkled, and she shook her head in a determined way.

"I am glad of it!" she declared. "And you can depend upon my doing the best I can for you."

"You are free, then, to engage in the enterprise?"

"Oh, yes! As I told you, I have just come from England, and have no engagements to hamper me."

"I have an idea from what I have already discovered about this case that it is going to be one of the most difficult I ever undertook," Joe Phenix remarked, in his grave, judicial way.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Phenix, don't think I am trying to compliment you when I say that it is my opinion that, no matter how difficult the case is, the chances are great you will be able to achieve success!" the girl exclaimed in a tone which plainly showed she meant what she said.

"I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion," the man-hunter responded, smilingly. "And I will not attempt to deny that as a rule I usually do succeed in running down my game."

"That is your reputation undoubtedly."

"But this is no ordinary case, and the men who are engineering it are no common rascals," the detective explained.

"It is not an extremely difficult matter to trap the average crook, for the great majority who adopt a life of crime proceed in just about the same way, and after a man gets used to their devices it is possible for him when he takes up a case to make a good guess as to how it was worked."

"Yes, I understand; but in this matter you are utterly in the dark," the girl remarked in a thoughtful way.

"That is correct. All I have to go upon is mere supposition."

"I know that the girl is dead, and I do not think there is any doubt that she was the wife of this Lorraine Trevanion, Constance Blakeley."

"These are the only facts I have learned. I suspect that the woman was murdered, but why she was killed, and what anybody could gain by killing her is a mystery."

"I firmly believe, from the way in which the Englishman acted, that he knows how the woman came to her death, and so have jumped to the conclusion that the unfortunate girl was the victim of a conspiracy."

"Acting upon this idea, I shadowed Trevanion and ascertained that he had apartments on the ground floor of a house in one of the small, up-town cross streets—unfurnished apartments, mind you, which he has fitted up and where he is apparently keeping bachelor's hall."

"It is strange that he should go to that trouble when there are so many furnished rooms which can be had at reasonable figures in the city," Miss Lawrence remarked.

"Can't you guess the reason?" Joe Phenix asked with a meaning smile.

"Well, in furnished apartments the landlady would be apt to keep an eye on him, and she would have to enter the rooms to attend to

them, while in unfurnished apartments no one would be apt to pay any attention to him, and he would be free to come and go without attracting observation."

"That is correct," the detective remarked. "And then another important point. He would be able to have all the visitors he liked without anybody being likely to trouble their heads about them."

"Yes, I did not think of that," the young actress observed. "And if he was engaged in any crooked work, so it was necessary that his pals should call upon him it would be extremely important for him to arrange it so they could do so without exciting suspicion," she continued.

"You are right," the detective declared with an approving nod.

"I don't suppose that a girl like yourself has ever taken much interest in scientific matters," the detective remarked, abruptly.

"No, I can't say that I ever have," Miss Lawrence responded, surprised by the observation.

"Some of these scientific men have got matters down to a fine point, as the saying is," Joe Phenix asserted.

"There are several species of birds and animals which are now extinct, but their bones are sometimes dug up, and some of these savans have become so expert in their particular lines that from one small, apparently unimportant bone they have been able to reconstruct the whole, and so present us with a picture of the original."

"I couldn't for the life of me make out what you were driving at when you began!" the young actress exclaimed.

"Do you understand now?" the detective asked with a quiet smile.

"Oh, yes! Like the savant with the bone, from an apparently trifling circumstance you can get an idea of what kind of a game is on foot."

"Yes, that is about right," the detective assented.

"It was a strange chance which led me to Tarrytown," he continued in a thoughtful way.

"I am not at all superstitious—not the sort of man to be influenced by a dream—yet in this case, if I had not paid some attention to the visions which haunted my slumbers, I certainly never would have made the trip."

"I think it is one of the strangest circumstances of which I have ever heard!" the young actress declared.

"No doubt about that. It was merely a coincidence, of course, for as you are still in the land of the living, it certainly was not you who came in a dream and urged me to avenge your untimely taking off."

"That is true enough, for I am undoubtedly worth a dozen dead girls!" Mignon declared, with a saucy toss of her well-shaped head.

"The moment I discovered that Trevanion was in the village, I was able to predict that he had come for the express purpose of identifying the body, and everything turned out as I thought it would, excepting that the dead woman proved to be Constance Blakeley instead of yourself."

"Now, then, that the scene of action has changed to New York, this discovery that I have made in regard to Trevanion's quarters, satisfies me that I have not made a mistake in thinking he is up to some crooked game, and unless he is a great deal smarter rascal than I take him to be, it will be very strange indeed if I do not succeed in trapping him in the long run."

"Oh, yes, with any one who is well acquainted with you, Mr. Phenix, that goes without saying!" the young actress declared.

"And then, too, I think, from what I have seen of your career, that you are not only skillful, but also extremely lucky; and, do you know, I am a great believer in luck!"

"There is an old saying, you remember, that it is better to be born lucky than rich, and I believe there is a deal of truth in it."

"Yes, I agree with you in regard to that," the detective assented.

"I have secured apartments in the house where Trevanion has taken up his abode," he continued.

"And so gained all the advantages which he possesses in regard to being able to come and go without being likely to attract notice."

"That was a capital move!" the young actress declared.

"I have already made arrangements to put a couple of spies on the track of this wily Englishman, and if you will undertake to assist me, I shall have three specials on the case."

"Oh, yes; I will be glad to do all I can to upset the schemes of this miserable wretch!" the girl exclaimed.

"I have a long memory, and I have not forgotten how badly the fellow treated me," she added.

"And I can assure you that it would afford me a deal of satisfaction to see him behind the bars of a felon's cell, and understand there was a good prospect that he would do the State some service at the stone boarding-house up the river, the Hotel de Sing Sing."

CHAPTER XVI.

MIGNON'S SCHEME.

"It is quite natural that you should feel in this way about the matter," the detective remarked.

"You would be more than mortal if you did not wish for revenge, after the way in which you have been treated."

"Well, I am far from being an angel, and you can depend upon my doing all I can to bring this accomplished rascal to justice."

"Do you suppose he is aware that you went to England?" Joe Phenix asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think it is very probable that he knows all about my trip," Miss Lawrence answered.

"It was something of an undertaking for the projectors of the enterprise to carry over a large burlesque troupe composed entirely of Americans, and the scheme caused a deal of talk in theatrical circles; the dramatic newspapers had a great deal to say in regard to the matter, and even the majority of the daily journals gave a list of the company before we sailed, and a full account of how the American blonde burlesquers were going to beard the British lion in his den, so as Trevanion is a man who always liked to hang around the theaters, and was more or less intimate with theatrical people, it is about as certain as anything can be in this uncertain world, to my thinking, that he was well aware I went with the troupe to England."

"And as it is not possible for him to know that you have returned, he, of course, supposes you to be still in England," Joe Phenix remarked in a thoughtful way.

"Oh, yes; since I landed I have not seen a soul that I knew, with the exception of yourself."

"That is a point in our favor, for if he knew you were in the country he might be on his guard, thinking you would be apt to try to get even with him for the wrong he did you."

"There is little doubt about that!" the young actress exclaimed. "My gentleman knows me well enough to understand that if I could by any lucky possibility get a chance at him I would be sure to damage him all I could."

"It will be necessary for you to assume a disguise," the detective remarked.

"That will not trouble me any," the young actress replied.

"How will it do for me to translate myself into a man?" she continued.

"I can play a role of that kind to perfection," Miss Lawrence declared.

"You see I am about as big as the average young fellow—the about-town chappie—and, I know the habits of the class to perfection."

"I traveled with a troupe in England for six months and only played one part in all that time, a young English swell, and looked and acted so much like a young fellow that the great majority of the people who saw the play declared that it was a bit of humbug to put a woman's name on the playbill when any one could see with half an eye that it was a young man who acted the part."

"I do not wonder at the incredulity, for you certainly have a very masculine way with you."

"Oh, yes! and I ought to have been a boy, anyway for I am not a bit like a woman," the young actress exclaimed.

"And then too, do you notice that there is a slight growth of down on my upper lip, which has a horrid resemblance to a mustache?" Miss Mignon asked with a charming pout.

"I have seen old French women with such a finely developed mustache that a razor was really needed, and I don't know but what I will either have to patronize a barber or shave myself if this sort of thing keeps on," the young actress added, assuming a doleful look and shaking her head as though she was very much worried by the circumstance.

"Yes, I have met aged French dames who possessed this hirsute adornment, and although I must admit that the manly mustache did not add to their attractiveness, yet I must say that in your case it certainly does not detract from your good looks," the detective remarked.

"Ah, you are a sad flatterer, Mr. Phenix, I really believe!" Mignon declared, shaking her finger at him, archly.

"Oh, not! Nothing but the truth, upon my word!" the detective responded.

"Well, it does not matter much whether it is an adornment or a blemish," the young actress remarked. "Nature has chosen that I shall wear it, and so I must make the best of the matter whether I am pleased or not."

"It will certainly aid you greatly in assuming a masculine disguise," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, I am aware of that. It was the down on my upper lip which made the English theater-goers so sure that I was not a woman."

"Don't you try to tell me that the party isn't a young fellow? I heard one dogmatic Johnny Bull declare. 'Can't I see that he is raising a blooming mustache with my own eyes?'" the actress exclaimed, giving a fine imitation of the bluff and positive manner of a bold Briton.

"I am not surprised that the audience were unwilling to believe you were a woman, for

when dressed in male attire, I do not think the shrewdest judge would be able to detect that you were not what you appeared to be.

"You must bear in mind though that this role which you are about to undertake is far more difficult than to play the character of a man on the mimic stage," the detective warned.

"Oh, yes, I understand that!" Mignon exclaimed, quickly.

"And what renders my task still more difficult, too, is the fact that I shall probably come in contact with this man who was once my husband, and I must change my appearance so completely, and act my character so well, that he will not have any suspicions that he has ever encountered me before."

"He hates you, of course, for men of his stamp always hate the victims whom they have wronged, and the eyes of an enemy are usually keen," Joe Phenix remarked.

"I comprehend, and you can rest assured that I shall take such precautions that even this scheming, shrewed-eyed Englishman will not be able to penetrate my disguise."

"In the first place I will have my hair cut short, and then I will dye it black. When my hair is an inch or so long it always curls in little crispy rings, and then by applying a stain to my face I will be able to pass for a young Southerner—one of the Creole planters from the New Orleans district."

"I have been to New Orleans a half-a-dozen times, and played in about all of the little towns tributary to that center so I am well posted in regard to the country."

"That idea is an excellent one, and if you make such a complete change in your appearance I do not think there is much danger of even your recreant husband being able to recognize you."

"You can depend upon my playing the part to the very best of my ability!" the young actress declared with flashing eyes.

"The desire for vengeance urges me on, and I can assure you that I will strain every nerve to achieve success."

"This man has deeply wronged me," Mignon continued. "I was an idiot to marry him in the first place for I did not love him—in fact I never knew what it was to love a man in all my life the way the other girls seem to do, and when this fellow came along and paid me such devoted attention, I rather wonder how it was that I did not feel any symptoms of the 'grand passion,' as the French say."

"I liked him well enough, you understand; the fellow has a cunning tongue and he flattered me in the shrewdest manner."

"I knew that his talk was all nonsense, of course, but it was rather pleasant to be told that I was perfection itself, even when I knew that it wasn't true, but I did not feel at all toward him as a woman usually feels toward the men whom they think of marrying."

"Just at that time the stage life was very distasteful to me."

"I never was much of an actress on the boards," she continued in an honest sort of way.

"In fact, everybody always said that I acted a great deal better at rehearsal than I did at night."

"That, you see, was before I got into this burlesque business and had begun to despair of ever making anything on the stage when this smooth-spoken Englishman came along, so when he told his ghost stories about what great expectations he had, and protested that he would one day be master of a princely estate I was fool enough to listen to him."

"I ought to have known better, of course, but I did not stop to consider, I did not think I would ever make anything on the stage and this seemed to offer me a splendid chance to better myself."

"I do not wonder that you thought the prospect an extremely favorable one," the detective observed.

"Many an old and experienced man of the world has fallen into just such a trap, so it was not surprising that you were caught."

"If I had listened to the dictates of my heart I would not have been deceived by this specious flatterer," Mignon declared.

"I knew that I did not care for him as a girl ought to care for the man to whom she is going to intrust all the happiness of her future life, but then my head told my heart that it was all sheer nonsense to look at the thing in a sentimental way; it was strictly business, and if I married the man knowing that I did not love him I would be merely doing as hundreds of women have done before me."

"It is the old reasoning, something akin to the declaration that the end justifies the means," the detective observed, slowly.

"Yes, but it is not true, and I was doomed to be bitterly punished for yielding to the temptation," the young actress remarked.

"But it is not of any use for me to repine now. I committed an act of folly, which was very near being a crime, for now that I have got my eyes open I consider that a woman who marries a man when she knows she does not love him basely wrongs not only herself but the man to whom she gives her hand."

"That is the truth, undoubtedly!"

"In this case, though, I did not wrong my husband, for I would have been a true and

faithful wife to him, if he had not turned out to be a mean, petty swindler who had me ely married me for the sake of getting hold of my money."

"Yes, the fellow richly deserves all the punishment that you can possibly inflict upon him."

"That is my idea and you can depend upon my doing all in my power to bring about the wretch's downfall!" Miss Lawrence declared, her face stern with resolution.

"By the way, I forgot to mention that Trevanion, in a conversation that he had with some traveling actors, who are playing in Tarrytown this week, declared that the reports of his marriage to you were false, and that no such union had ever taken place; he was merely a friendly acquaintance, nothing more."

The young actress looked surprised.

"Why on earth did the scamp want to tell such a falsehood?" she exclaimed.

"It is true he stole my marriage-certificate out of my trunk when he ran away, but I can prove that I was married to him all right if I wanted to take the trouble to do so."

"I mentioned the fact so you would know what he has been saying."

Then the detective arranged to meet the young actress at his apartments in the up-town street and the interview terminated.

"He denies that he married me, eh?" Mignon cried in a rage. "Ah, my fine fellow, wait a while and see if I do not amply avenge myself!"

Deeply excited was the young actress as she went on her way.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONFERENCE.

THE disguised detective waited until seven o'clock before he proceeded to his apartments, so as to give time for the furniture men to perform their task.

When he arrived at the house he met the landlord at the door who informed him that the men had just departed, and his apartments were all ready for occupancy.

"They have given you good work," the old gentleman remarked, as he preceded the disguised detective through the entry.

"I am glad to hear it," Joe Phenix replied. "Have you got a match, by the way?"

"No, but I have plenty up-stairs."

"Probably we can get some from the gentleman in the front room, and you will be saved the labor of going after them," the man-hunter suggested.

"He is not in," the old gentleman replied. "And it will not be any trouble for me to get them."

Information in regard to the whereabouts of the Englishman was what the detective sought, and this was why he spoke as he did.

The landlord conveyed the information in a positive way, but as Joe Phenix usually acted on the idea that no matter how positive a man might be there was always a chance that he might be mistaken, he took advantage of the old gentleman's being out of the way to go and thump on Trevanion's door.

There wasn't any answer and Joe Phenix, perceiving there was no key in the lock, came to the conclusion that the Englishman was indeed absent.

Then the landlord returned with the matches—it was getting dark by this time.

The gas was lit; the disguised detective expressed himself as being much pleased with the work which had been done, and then the landlord departed.

As soon as he was out of the way, Joe Phenix turned the key in the lock, produced half-a-dozen skeleton keys from his pocket—spoils which he had wrested from captured rascals—and hastened to the door which led into the front apartments.

The first key he tried was a fit; the bolt shot back and the door yielded to his hand.

"If I should be caught at this sort of work I would be apt to get into trouble," the man-hunter observed, with a smile, as he proceeded to make a careful examination of the premises.

The apartments were plainly furnished, and the acute detective did not discover anything likely to excite suspicion.

"The man had an object, of course, in taking up his quarters here," the man-hunter mused, as he glanced around the apartment.

"This is a radical change in his way of living, and he would not have adopted it without a good reason for so doing."

"Probably the main idea was to secure a headquarters where his pals could call on him without exciting suspicion."

"I was in hopes I would be able to arrange matters so that by means of a bit and a brace I could play the listener to the conversation of the crooks, but the arrangement of the apartments upsets that idea."

The inner room, next to the detective's apartment, and into which the door led, was a small bedroom, and as the front apartment was double the size it was only natural for the man-hunter to come to the conclusion that the crooks would be much more likely to hold their conference in the front room rather than in the other.

"Well, although I have not succeeded in making anything this time I may have better luck on another occasion," the disguised detective remarked, as he retreated to his own rooms, taking care to lock the door again after he passed through.

"That makes that all right again," he remarked.

Then placing his door just ajar, so he could hear the moment any one came into the entry, he sat down by it, and began to read a newspaper to pass the time away.

He had not been thus occupied over ten minutes when he heard the front door open, and from the sound of the footsteps he judged that there were three or four men in the party.

Then he heard the noise made by unlocking a door, and so judged that the new-comers were the Englishman and his pals.

When the shutting of the door showed him that the men had entered the apartment, Joe Phenix closed his own door, turned down his gas, so that if any of the men took into their heads to look through the keyhole they would only have their labor for their pains.

After taking this precaution the man-hunter took up a position at the door, hoping to be able to play the spy upon the men in the other apartment, but after lighting the gas the Englishman closed the door between the bedroom and the outer apartment, and this movement completely baffled Joe Phenix's design.

But though the man-hunter was not able to overhear the conversation we will take advantage of the author's privilege and relate for the benefit of our readers the words of the three men.

First we will describe the companions of the Englishman.

One was a rather tall man of forty-five, or thereabouts, a well-built, gentlemanly-looking fellow with strongly marked features.

His hair was jet-black, parted in the center, after the English style, and he wore a short beard, also divided in the middle, which gave him a decidedly aristocratic English look.

He was dressed in the height of fashion, and the average individual would have set him down at the first glance as being a man of wealth and position.

And such a judgment as this would go far to show how easily the world at large can be deceived, for this elegant-appearing gentleman was one of the most dangerous rascals that the old world ever hunted across the ocean to prey upon the denizens of the new one.

He was the very king of "confidence-men," as the crooks are termed whose game it is to prey upon the credulity of the world at large.

Captain Gordon Murphy was the name he bore, but with such an accomplished genius, whose habit it was to adopt a new appellation every month or two, the name under which he traveled mattered but little.

Among the crooks though the case is different.

The rascals, like the western miners, are in the habit of giving their pals nick-names, and although when a man gets into evil ways and becomes a crook his right name is usually lost, yet the nickname clings to him to his dying day.

And so, in the fraternity of rascals, where Captain Gordon Murphy posed as a particularly bright and shining light, he was known as "Irish Jim."

Ireland was reputed to be the birthplace of this elegant rogue, although coming from good stock and being well-educated, he was without a "brogue," only indulging in a Hibernian "swear-word" once in a while to give due point to his discourse.

The second man was a complete contrast to the first, being short and stockily built, with a stolid face, and although he was neatly dressed in a dark business suit, yet the clothes sat ill on him, and he had the appearance of an ignorant laborer dressed in his Sunday best.

He was just a common, every-day rascal, had been a horse-shoer in his youthful days, then, as he was a powerful fellow, drifted into pugilism, became a boxer. Peter Slam was his name, but in the flowery language of the prize ring he was known as the Dangerous Blacksmith; but although he was strong enough he was slow on his feet, and not a good boxer, so he never cut much of a figure in the "magic circle," as the sporting men call the fighting arena.

From the prize-ring to the crooked paths of crime was an easy step, and one soon taken, but even as a crook the Dangerous Blacksmith did not amount to much, for he was a dull fellow, and when he attempted any operation on his own hook generally made a bungle of it, so he had dropped to becoming an assistant to bolder and more skillful rascals.

"Help yourself to chairs," said Trevanion, after he had closed the bedroom door.

"Would you like a glass of wine?" he continued, unlocking a closet in one corner of the apartment, while the others seated themselves at the table in the center of the room.

"I have port and sherry, whichever you prefer."

"I will take a little port," the captain responded.

"Dash yer wishy-washy wine!" the Dangerous Blacksmith growled.

"Sich stuff makes me sick! Ain't you got some whisky, or something that has got some heart into it?"

"W'ot is the use of a man fooling away his time on wine? Why, even beer is a blamed sight better!"

"I have some brandy," the Englishman responded, placing two bottles and three glasses on the table. "But you want to keep your head clear, you know, if we are going to talk business."

"Ah, w'ot do you take me for?" the ruffian exclaimed. "You never saw me the worse for booze, did you?"

"I can't say as I ever did, but then my acquaintance with you is limited," Trevanion rejoined.

"The cap'n here kin tell you w'ot kind of a cove I am!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

I am one of the right sort now, you kin bet yer sweet life! and w'ot I says goes, every time!"

"Dangerous has got a good head for liquor and a few drinks will not do him any harm," the captain remarked, as he helped himself to a glass of wine.

"I do not doubt that it is all right," Trevanion said as he followed the Irishman's example. "But as we are engaged in a ticklish bit of business it would be well for all of us to keep our wits about us."

"You need not be afeard about me!" the ruffian declared. "So here's looking at you!"

And as he spoke the Dangerous Blacksmith filled his glass two-thirds full of the brandy and then drained it at a single swallow.

The others sipped their wine leisurely, and with the air of men who were good judges of the article.

"That is mighty good stuff, you bet your life!" the rough declared. "And I don't mind if I take another crack at it!"

"Yes, it is worth about twelve dollars by the gallon," Trevanion remarked.

"Geel you don't say so!" the bruiser exclaimed in amazement. "It is good lusb, but you kin bet yer boots that I would look at twelve dollars a long time before I would give it up for anything of this kind!"

And then he drained the glass again, but he made two swallows of it this time.

"It is blamed good stuff though!" he added. "Still, I reckon good common whisky would suit me about as well."

And then he proceeded to help himself to the brandy again.

The captain and Trevanion exchanged glances; despite the fact that the Dangerous Blacksmith was known to have a great head for liquor, it was plain that the brandy was beginning to have an effect upon him, and so they came to the conclusion that he must have been drinking heavily before he joined them.

"I say, Dangerous, if I were you I would go a little slow on that," the captain remarked. "We have come here to talk business and if you get your brains muddled with the brandy you will not be in any condition to do it."

"Oa, that is all right!" the rough responded. "I could drink a dozen bottles like this and not feel it."

"And you are right too about talking business," he added. "That is jest what I have come for, you bet your sweet life!" And there was menace in his tone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BRUISER'S DISCLOSURE.

AGAIN the captain and Trevanion exchanged glances.

Both were men of remarkable comprehension and they were quick to understand that the liquor had made the Dangerous Blacksmith inclined to be quarrelsome, and for some reason he was disposed to be ugly toward them.

Murphy was a man who on many an occasion had proved that he possessed courage and resolution which if exerted in a good cause would surely have proven his right to the title of hero, and therefore he was not one to shrink from meeting any responsibility which arose, so on the present occasion he proceeded to promptly perform the operation which sporting men term "calling down."

"Dangerous, I can't say that I admire the tone which you use," the captain remarked.

"If my ears do not deceive me there is a suspicion of a threat in your voice, and as I am a very plain, straight-forward sort of a chap, as you ought to know by this time, I will thank you to come right out with what you have in your mind."

"You are right for a thousand 'cases!'" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared, emphatically.

"I ain't one of the kind of fellers w'ot believes in beating about the bush. If I have got anything on my mind I believe in getting it off as soon as possible."

"Oh, yes, much the best way," the captain declared with an approving nod.

"Well, now then, gents, I am a-coming out with it, fair and square!" the ruffian declared, in an aggressive way, and as he spoke he settled himself back in his chair with an air of dogged determination.

"That is it—that is the way to talk!" the captain responded. "Come right out with what you think, and then business will progress. I hate a man who beats about the bush instead of coming straight to the point."

"Oh, I will give it to you straight enough," the Dangerous Blacksmith declared with an ugly frown.

"That is what we want!" Murphy responded in a brisk, business-like way.

"Well then, to spit the thing right out, I don't think you are treating me jest as I ought to be treated in this 'ere thing!" the ruffian exclaimed.

A look of surprise appeared on the face of the captain.

"Really, now, I don't understand this," Murphy replied. "I don't think you have any right to complain."

"Yes, I have!" the other retorted, angrily. "You have not let me into this thing at all."

"Let you into it?" the captain asked.

"Yes, that is w'ot I said, I am a working in the dark!"

"Oh, I begin to comprehend. You think you ought to understand just what kind of a game we are trying to play."

"That is it! You have got it dead straight, and don't you forget it!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared, shaking his head in an angry way.

"But I am afraid, Dangerous, that I shall be obliged to disagree with you in regard to this point," the captain remarked in a reflective sort of way.

"You don't think I ought for to know?" the bruiser snarled.

"I don't see why you should know our plans," Murphy replied, firmly.

"Ain't I working on the job?"

"You have done some work, of course," the captain admitted. "But you must bear in mind the fact, Dangerous, that you were well paid for what you did."

"You ponied up what you agreed to pay, of course; I ain't saying that you did not," the ruffian replied.

"I don't see then that you have any cause to complain," the captain urged.

"Ah, yes, but I am a-thinking that I did not git half as much money for w'ot I did as I ought to have got," the Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

"I didn't reckon when I went into the thing how much money there might be in it; and so I put my price low."

"You ought to be satisfied as long as you were settled with at your own figures," Trevanion took occasion to remark.

"Yes, but don't I tell you that if I had known jest how big the game was I would have wanted more money?" the bruiser replied.

"Ah, but are you posted in regard to the game?" the captain asked.

"No, I ain't. I know it, and that is why I am a-growing."

"Why do you think the game is a big one?" Murphy inquired. "You admit that you don't know anything about it."

"I have been thinking about the matter since I got into it," the Dangerous Blacksmith remarked.

"If I remember, when you came to me to go into the thing you didn't go into no explanation."

"Certainly not!" the captain replied, promptly. "In my judgment none was needed."

"I told you that I wanted a certain piece of work done, and explained how the matter could be arranged so that there wasn't hardly a particle of risk," he added.

"That is correct, and then I told you w'ot I would take to do the job and we made a bargain. But, as I said, I didn't reckon then how much there was in the game or else I should have wanted a heap sight more money."

"Which you would not have got!" the captain promptly declared.

"I paid you every cent that the job was worth, and if you had not been willing to take my offer I would have found some other man to do the work."

"You couldn't have found anybody who would have done the job any better than I did!" the bruiser growled.

"Maybe not, but I certainly could have found one who would have done the job equally as well, and the chances are great, too, that the man would have been satisfied with the sum of money he had agreed to take, and would not have complained after the affair was over that he had not been well-treated."

"I would be a fool not to try and collar more money if I saw a chance to do it, hey?" the ruffian announced.

"I don't understand where you get the idea that there is a large amount of money in this game," Trevanion observed.

The ruffian grinned in a knowing way.

"Oh! you wonder how I got onto that, hey?"

"I am not admitting, mind you, that there is any big money in our scheme," the Englishman hastened to declare. "I am only surprised that you should get the idea into your head that there is."

"Now you two blokes are away up at the top

of the heap!" The Dangerous Blacksmith exclaimed in a defiant sort of way.

"I don't s'pose there is any men in the business who kin give you any points, and when a man like myself is compared to you, why, I ain't anywhere."

"You are pleased to flatter us," the captain remarked in a sarcastic way.

"Oh, it is the truth, fast enough, and you know it!" the other declared. "But even such high-rollers as you are make a blunder once in a while."

"Yes, yes, that is undoubtedly true. The man who never makes mistakes is an uncommonly rare bird," the captain remarked.

"I went into this thing kinder blind," the ruffian observed, reflectively. "But that ain't no wonder, for I never did have much of a head for calculating, and when you told me why you wanted the job done it seemed to be all right, and reasonable enough; but after the thing was over, and I come to think about it, the idee came to me that you hadn't given it to me on the dead square, so I made up my mind to keep an eye on you, in hopes to git a chance to ring into the little game."

"It was not wise for you to look at the matter in that light," Murphy declared.

"We paid you your price for the work, which you agreed to do without baggling, and you ought to have been satisfied."

"I would be a fool if I didn't go in to make all I can!" the Dangerous Blacksmith responded, bluntly.

"I didn't say anything to you about it 'cos I knew that I wouldn't stand much chance to git into the game if you got an idee of what I was up to."

"You are quite right in that supposition, Dangerous," the captain observed, with a peculiarly icy smile. "I am not the kind of man to take anybody into a game with me unless there is a good chance that they will prove useful, and I can just tell you, right now, there are mighty few games that a man like myself could go into and be able to use a chap of your kind, for the line in which you work is so radically different from mine that the two can hardly come together."

"Oh, yes, you are a pair of highfivers, I know," the bruiser admitted. "But for all that I think you ought to give me a show."

"If we cannot use you we would be stupid to give you a show," Murphy urged.

"Well, I want to come in, and I am going to work the trick if I can!" the bruiser declared, doggedly.

"There isn't any chance!" Murphy responded, with the air of a man who thought the declaration ought to settle the matter.

"And you need not have taken the trouble to come here about the matter either," the captain continued. "I could have told you this on the street, but when you said you had some important business to talk over with us, I believed, of course, that there was something in it."

"As I was saying, captain, even smart men, like yourself, make big blunders sometimes!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared, abruptly.

"And I remarked that it would not be strange if I did."

"You made a bad break when you left that newspaper on the top of the lamp-post box instead of putting it inside!" the bruiser declared, with a malignant smile.

From the triumphant way in which he spoke it was evident that The Dangerous Blacksmith believed his speech was going to make a decided impression but not a muscle in the faces of the others changed.

"I cannot agree with you on that point," the captain replied, in his quiet, yet decided way.

"It was not a bad break; I had to put the newspaper on the top of the box because it was too big to go inside."

"Of course, I understand that, but to my thinking it was a bad break for you, and a good one for me," the ruffian retorted.

"How so?"

"Why, I happened, jest by accident, to be across the street, and I see'd you when you put the paper on the box, although you didn't see me."

"I was not troubling my head about any spies," the captain remarked in a contemptuous tone.

"The moment I see'd you put the newspaper on the box, the idee came to me that you was up to some game, so I jest waited until you was out of the way, and then I streaked over and swiped the paper."

Murphy laughed outright just as though he considered it to be a good joke, but there was an angry light in Trevanion's eyes.

"You swiped the newspaper, eh?" the captain remarked.

"You bet yer sweet life I did!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared. "And I worked the trick so well, too, that nobody caught onto it."

"Now, really, you have astonished me, Dangerous!" the captain declared in a bantering way. "I wouldn't really have believed that you was up to a game of this kind."

"And arter I got the paper, I jest examined it."

"Thinking, no doubt, that it would give you a clew to the game I was playing," Murphy observed in a very sarcastic way.

"Oh, yes, and it did."

"It did?" the captain exclaimed, apparently amazed.

"Why, of course it did! Why do you want for to act as if you thought it didn't?" the bruiser asked in an injured sort of way.

"I will have to ask you to explain, for I cannot see how it would give you any clew to any game of mine," Murphy argued, shaking his head doubtfully.

"In the first place, the newspaper was addressed to Mister Brazil Lecount, number something or other Madison avenue."

"That is correct."

"Now, wot was a man like yourself sending a paper to a big-bug like this here cove for?"

"That is a conundrum, and you will have to guess it," the captain replied with a perfectly grave face.

"I opened the paper—it was easy enough to slip it out of the wrapper without tearing it—and I found that the account of the Tarrytown affair—the coroner's inquest—was marked with ink so that when anybody looked at the paper they couldn't help seeing that particular piece."

"Well, that was quite a discovery," Murphy remarked in a mocking way.

"And after you made it, what did you do?" the captain continued.

"Shoved the paper back into the wrapper and started it on its way ag'in."

"That was right! No use to rob the mails unless you can make a stake by so doing," the captain observed, mockingly.

"Then, as I was allers a great man for to put two and two together I started up to Madison avenue for to find out jest what kind of a bloke this here Mister Brazil Lecount was."

"And I presume you succeeded in discovering what you wanted without any difficulty," Murphy remarked in an indifferent way.

"Oh, yes; everybody up there knew Mister Lecount, and when I came to put on my thinking cap I remembered that I had seen his name lots of times in the newspapers."

"He is one of the big preachers—a bloke wot gets ten thousand dollars a year for telling the big-bugs wot poor, miserable sinners they are, and the ice-man wot supplies him—who happened to be an old pal of mine—told me that he s'pose this here preacher man was worth a hundred thousand dollars."

"Now when I found out this here thing, you understand, I began to get an idee that you were up to playing a mighty big game, and I would be a fool if I didn't ring into it, somehow!"

"Dangerous, you mean well but you are away off," the captain observed in a tone which seemed to indicate that he was more amused than alarmed by the disclosure of the other.

"You have not got any clew to any game of mine!"

"The blazes I hav'n't!" the bruiser, exclaimed, angrily.

"No, indeed!"

"Didn't you send the newspaper with the account of this here Tarrytown affair marked with ink, so that the preacher couldn't fail to see it?"

"Suppose I did—what of it?"

"Don't that go to show that the affair has got something to do with him?"

"It might appear that way on the surface," the captain replied, musingly.

"And this bloke gets ten thousand dollars a year in clear cash, and is worth a hundred thousand on top of that!"

"If that is correct, and I have no doubt it is, the man is certainly well fixed, as you Americans say," Murphy remarked, in a bantering way.

"And you are going to strike him for a big pile, too—you are going to bleed him, for he has got something to do with this here Tarrytown business!" the Dangerous Blacksmith ejaculated.

Both Murphy and Trevanion laughed in the face of the other, much to his astonishment and anger.

"Oh, you fellers kin snicker all you like!" he cried. "But you kin bet yer boots that I am going to have my whack out of this pudding or else I will upset the bull thing!"

"Oh, no, you will not do anything of the kind, so don't make any foolish threats," Murphy said, sternly.

"Just calmly reflect upon the matter now, and calculate who will get hurt most if you should be unwise enough to kick up a row, so as to allow the detectives to suspect there is something wrong about the affair."

"Come, be sensible! Wouldn't a man about your size be in a hole?"

"Nobody could prove nothing!" the ruffian declared, in a sullen way.

"Don't you be so sure about that!" the captain retorted.

"This is a mighty uncertain world, you know, and a prudent man never takes any chances that he can possibly avoid."

"If you are wise you will not start the detectives on this case, for the prospect is good that if they do get on the scent they will be more apt to damage you than any one else."

"I don't feel so sure 'bout that as you seem to," the bruiser growled, in a sulky way.

"Don't be bull-headed about the matter!" the captain warned.

"If you will take time to look the matter over carefully, you will see that if the detectives get on the track, you will be in more danger than anybody else, so don't make a fool of yourself by trying to frighten old stagers like Trevanion and myself with empty threats."

"When I git my mad up I am inclined to be ugly!" the bruiser blustered.

"Oh, I don't doubt that," the captain responded, dryly.

"But the question is this: Can you afford to pull down the house for the purpose of getting square with men whom you think are not treating you well when you know there is a big chance of your being crushed in the ruins?"

"Revenge for a fancied slight is all right if a man doesn't have to pay too much for it, but there is such a thing as paying too dearly for one's whistle, you know."

"I ain't apt to keer much how things go when I git my blood up!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared, in a dogged, defiant way, yet, notwithstanding the air of bravado which he assumed, it was plain that the warning words of the captain had made an impression on him.

"I do not blame any man for doing the best he can for himself, but a man is a fool who runs into danger when he can keep out just as well as not," Murphy remarked.

"Now then, let me talk a little sense to you," the captain continued. "You thought that when you made the discovery that I sent a marked newspaper to this minister you had got hold of a big thing?"

"Yes, I reckoned so," the bruiser replied, slowly, evidently amazed that the other did not seem to be at all troubled about the matter.

"Dangerous, that is just where you made the biggest kind of a mistake!" Murphy declared.

"Now, in regard to sending the marked newspaper to this Lecount, I will have to admit that I did the trick, because, as you are well aware of the fact, it would be merely a waste of time for me to deny it, but what my game is—what I hoped to gain by sending the paper is something that I intend to keep to myself, and I can tell you that if you were ten times smarter than you are it would not be possible for you to learn my motives."

"I ain't so sure of that!" the Dangerous Blacksmith rejoined in a sulky way.

"There is an old saying that the proof of the pudding is in the eating; there is a deal of truth in that ancient adage, and the way to convince you that I am telling the truth when I say there isn't any money in it for a man about your size is for you to go ahead and see what you can make out of it."

"I don't see how the thing can be done," the bruiser observed.

"It is easy enough!" the captain declared.

"Listen while I lay out the programme for you," he continued.

"You have got the idea in your head that this wealthy minister is connected with the Tarrytown tragedy in some way and that I proposed to levy blackmail upon him—bleed him as you bluntly put it."

"Why that is the game, of course! It is as plain as the nose on a man's face!" The Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

"I do not doubt that you have come to that conclusion, but as I said before, you are away off!" the captain declared.

"Now then, suppose you go in to try and work a game of that kind and see where you will come out."

"How kin I do it?"

"Go to the minister, tell him that you know all about his connection with the Tarrytown tragedy and suggest that it would be well for him to come to some understanding with you about the matter."

"But if he tries to bluff me, and swears he don't know anything about it, how kin I go for him when I ain't got anything to go on?"

"Ah, but you ought to be able to tell by the way he acts whether there is any truth in the charge or not," Murphy declared.

"I couldn't work a game of that kind!" the ruffian declared.

"Let some fellow in whom you can trust to do the job for you," Murphy suggested.

"My wife would be just the one to do the job up brown, if I could get her to go into it," the Dangerous Blacksmith affirmed.

"Your wife! I didn't know that you were married!"

"Oh, yes; you have heered of Sarah Black—Sheeney Sal, as the fly cops call her?"

"Yes."

"She is my wife, but we don't git along very well together, for she says I am too rough to work with her; she is in the confidence line, you know."

The captain nodded, for the woman was well known to him by reputation.

"I think I could get her to go into this thing though."

"Can you get her to try the trick right away?"

"I think so."

"Very well, we will wait here, and if you strike anything come back; if you don't come we will understand that you have given it up as a bad job."

CHAPTER XIX.

A FEMALE ROGUE.

THE Dangerous Blacksmith remarked that he was satisfied to let it go at this and took his departure, observing as he did so:

"It is allers a good thing to strike when the iron is hot."

The woman of whom he spoke was one of the best known crooks of the metropolis.

She was thirty-five or forty years old, and had led a crooked life ever since she was a girl of ten or twelve years.

At first a "shoplifter," a petty thief, who, in company with her mother, preyed upon the great drygoods stores.

Then, as she grew older, she drifted into the confidence line, where there was a much better prospect for booty and decidedly less risk.

She was a plain-faced woman, but had a pleasant way with her, and was possessed of wonderful conversational powers.

The reason she and Pete Slam did not get on well together was because when the Dangerous Blacksmith got too much liquor on board he liked to amuse himself by beating his wife, and as she would not submit to treatment of that kind she left him.

The ruffian had cut up particularly "rusty," as he would have expressed it, at this proceeding, and threatened to have her life if she did not return to him, but when he happened to meet her and repeated the threat she whipped out a razor and swore she would cut him in a dozen places if he ever dared to attempt to carry out his threat.

The resolution written in the woman's face cowed the bruiser, and he never dared to molest her.

He went on his way and allowed her to go hers, and so they got on all right.

She had been the means of putting some good jobs in his way, and he had done as much for her, so on this occasion he felt no hesitation in seeking her aid.

She lived with her mother in a tenement-house on East Fourteenth street, and thither the bruiser proceeded.

He was lucky enough to find the woman, and alone, so he could proceed at once to business.

"Like all of the crooks the Dangerous Blacksmith did not believe in trusting anybody any more than he could possibly avoid it, and so the story he told to Sheeney Sal was that he had detected two men, whom he knew to be high-roller confidence fellows, mailing a newspaper—how he had stole the journal and upon examination found they had marked the account of the Tarrytown tragedy; then explained that he had jumped to the conclusion that there was some blackmail business at the bottom of it and had tried to get in for a share."

"They wouldn't have it, of course!" the woman exclaimed, anticipating the result of the application.

"No, they would not."

Then he told how they had denied that they were up to any game of the kind, winding up with their invitation for him to try his luck.

"You are not such a chump as to imagine that you can make anything out of this business?" the woman asked.

"I thought there might be a chance."

"Oh, no! I don't think so!"

"There is some game afoot or else they would not have sent the marked newspaper," the Dangerous Blacksmith urged.

"Well, I suppose there is; but if you don't know the particulars how on earth are you going to make anything out of it?"

"I reckoned this 'ere way: these ministers are a skeerey crowd, you know, and if this 'ere big-bug is mixed up with this gal wot drowned herself at Tarrytown, maybe, if he thought there was anybody posted 'bout the thing he would come down handsomely for to git 'em to keep their mouths shut."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" the woman declared, doubtfully.

"In my opinion you don't stand a ghost of a show to make anything, for if these parties, who, of course, know just how the land lays, thought you did, they would never have suggested the scheme to you."

"It will not do any harm to try, and you can do the trick if anybody can."

"Much obliged to you for your good opinion, but it is my belief there isn't any money in it, still it will not do any harm to try."

"S'pose you go right up!" the bruiser suggested.

"All right! to-night will do as well as any time."

"There is no mistaking the fact that this Mr. Lecount is a big fish and if one could succeed in hooking him there would undoubtedly be a deal

of money in the operation," the woman remarked as she proceeded to put on her hat and cloak.

"You have heard of the man then and know something about him."

"Oh, yes, I know all about him, for I have not only read of him in the newspapers but I have seen him, and heard him preach."

"I was up to his church once, thinking I might be able to do some business. That was about ten years ago, and I was a *knuck* (pick-pocket) then."

"Oh, he is a grand man!" she continued in an enthusiastic manner.

"Stands about six feet high, a handsome noble-looking man; must be about fifty-five or sixty years old now I should judge, and he is just a splendid preacher. I don't wonder that his church is willing to pay him a big salary. If I was rich I wouldn't mind having a pew in his church myself."

"Nice sort of a gal you are to talk about j'ning a church!" the Dangerous Blacksmith sneered.

"I was telling what I would do if I was rich," the woman retorted.

"If I had plenty of money do you suppose I would be fool enough not to lead an honest life?" she continued.

"I am a bad egg now because I can not help myself, but just you give me a chance to lead a square life and see how quickly I will jump at it."

"Ah, yes, that is w'ot every crook says, but when the chance comes they don't always go for it," the bruiser declared in a sneering way.

"Well, I would!" the woman responded. "Just give me the opportunity and see if I will not be as good as my word!"

CHAPTER XX.

CLEVER WORK.

By this time the woman was ready to depart and the two advanced to the door.

As the Dangerous Blacksmith laid his hand upon the knob there came a knock.

Slam opened the door and a good-sized boy, with a shockingly bad round felt hat pulled down over his eyes, and a ragged coat, so much too big for him that it extended from his neck to his heels, held up a package of matches and, in a wheedling voice, asked:

"Do yer vant to puy dose matches—two fer five?"

"No, don't want 'em! Git a move on yer!" the Dangerous Blacksmith replied, roughly.

The boy slunk away, apparently much frightened and hastened down stairs.

"What do you want to speak to the boy in that way for?" the woman demanded.

"If you don't want to buy his matches you need not frighten the life out of the creature. He is only trying hard to get an honest living!"

"I hate such brats!"

"Because he is a Jew!" the woman cried, sharply.

"Well, I am a Jew too, if you come to that, although it is a question if any decent Hebrew would be willing to acknowledge any such out-cast and apostate as I am for a sister," she continued with great bitterness.

"These little rascals are all a set of thieves, anyway," the man declared.

"There isn't one of them who wouldn't pick yer pocket as quick as look at you if they got a good chance."

"Poor little fellows!" Sheeny Sal exclaimed in a sympathizing way. "I suppose they have an awful hard time to get along, and I do not doubt that many a time when they descend to petty stealing it is because they are hungry and need the money to get something to eat. I know how that is myself."

"Bosh!" cried the Dangerous Blacksmith, roughly. "Nine out of ten of them steal jest for the fun of it, and they couldn't be honest if they wanted to, for it ain't in 'em!"

"Well, I don't think there was any call for you to frighten the life out of the boy, anyway!" the woman declared.

"You gave him such a scare that he started right down the stairs without attempting to try and sell his matches to anybody else."

"Served the young beggar right!"

By this time the two were well on their way to the street, and as they descended the steps which led from the front door to the pavement, Mrs. Slam looked around in search of the boy, but he was not in sight.

The ruffian noticed the look and guessed what she was after.

"He has taken himself off, and that shows he wasn't on the square!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

"But all these match-peddlers are sneak thieves, they only have their stuff with them for a blind. If they find a door open, and kin git inter the rooms while the people are out, they will git away with anything they can git their paws on."

"Oh, I guess this boy was honest enough; you frightened the wits out of him, that is all; he thought, maybe, that you were going to kick him, or something of that kind, and he ran for dear life."

"I reckon he deserved it or else he wouldn't have been so skeered," the man retorted.

The couple were now half-way to the corner, and leaving them to pursue their path we will explain what became of the boy.

After his repulse by the Dangerous Blacksmith he went down the stairs with a rush; if he expected that the rough-spoken bruiser intended to pursue him, with the intention of giving him a thrashing, he could not have hurried along at a greater rate of speed.

When he reached the sidewalk he turned to the right and hastened along to the third house from the one from which he came.

The block was one solid line of tenement-houses with basement shops.

As it happened, the shop in the third house was to let, and so was dark.

In the dark entrance crouched a boy.

To him the match-peddler hurried.

This boy, a Jew, was in his shirt-sleeves, with a cap too small for him stuck on the back of his bushy-haired head, and under his arm he had some newspapers.

The match-peddler snatched the cap from the head of the other boy, removed the hat from his own, and jammed it upon the head of the young Jew, then slipped out of the ragged overcoat, threw it at the youth, at the same time grabbing the papers from under his arm.

"Git inter dot waterproof as soon as you kin, Sheeney, an' cheese it across the street!" the new-comer exclaimed, and the speech betrayed that it was our old acquaintance, the irrepressible Petey G. Gallagher.

He helped the other on with the coat, and the two hastened across the street, taking refuge behind a wagon that was by the curbstone.

"Say, v'at ish der game?" inquired the Jew boy, looking around him in an inquisitive way.

"Sheeney, if you don't ax no questions, nobody ain't going to tell you any lies!" Petey declared, with the air of an oracle.

"You ain't got no right to growl 'bout dis yer' deal, you know, 'cos you have done fu'st-rate!" the boy continued.

"Dot vas all right!" the other observed, shaking his head in a puzzled way.

"Cert! you kin bet yer sweet life it is all right, and if it ain't, we will make it all right in de morning."

"How vas dot?" the Jewish youth asked, staring at the other, open-mouthed.

"Ah! come off! You ain't up to snuff! You ain't fly! You don't want ter go out inter der country now, you understand, 'cos the grass-hoppers will eat you, for you are so green!"

"How vas dot?" inquired the other, staring in amazement at the lively Petey.

"You want to take a tumble to yourself, and that is what is der matter with Hannah!" the newsboy declared, with the gravity of a sage.

"You are in tenpence for the use of yer coat and hat, and you never collared a dime easier in yer life, bet yer boots!"

"So long! I have got to git a move on me!"

And with the words Petey proceeded up the street toward Third avenue, leaving the Jew boy a prey to profound astonishment, for he was not able to make head nor tail of this strange performance.

The reader doubtless has guessed the truth, though.

Petey was playing the spy upon the Dangerous Blacksmith.

And this was a move which he had undertaken upon his own hook, and without orders.

But as it happened he knew the bruiser by sight, and was well aware of the reputation the fellow bore, and so when he saw him go into the house with Trevanion, and then come out alone, the thought came to him that it might be a good idea to shadow the man.

This task Petey performed without any trouble, for as the Dangerous Blacksmith had no idea that anything of the kind would be attempted he never took the trouble to take any precautions which would make the spy's task a difficult one.

When the ruffian entered the tenement-house though, the shadow was perplexed for a few moments.

There were twenty odd families in the house, and how would it be possible for him to tell into which apartment the man had gone, and Petey considered that it was extremely necessary for him to know.

Just at this time the Jew match-peddler made his appearance.

As it happened, Petey knew the boy, and the bright idea came to him to borrow his coat and hat for a disguise, go through the house with the matches, knocking at each door, trusting in this way to discover where the Dangerous Blacksmith had gone.

Of course, he could have tried this game with his newspapers, but then newsboys don't do business in that way, and suspicion might be excited; then too, Petey wanted to keep his own proper person in the background, for he intended to shadow the bruiser after he left the tenement-house, and if the Dangerous Blacksmith once got a good view of his face it would be apt to render the task an extremely difficult one, for the boy was shrewd enough to understand that if the ruffian's suspicions were once excited

—if he once got the notion that a spy was on his track, the chances were great he would take measures so the shadower would only have his labor for his pains.

The boy's scheme succeeded to perfection, as the reader knows, and now he was on the track of the bruiser and his companions, following them as patiently, and with as much perseverance as any blood-hound ever displayed on the trail.

The pair went up Fourteenth street to Union Square and there took a Fourth avenue car.

They had to wait at the corner for a few minutes for a car to come along, and when Petey perceived them come to a standstill, he guessed from the way they looked down the street that they intended to ride.

"Say! I must be in dis yere picnic, as sure as you're born!" the boy exclaimed.

He was on the opposite side of the way and about a hundred feet down the street.

As he only had a few of the newspapers it was easy for him to fold them up and stow them away in his pocket.

Then he crossed the street, passed behind the couple standing on the curbstone, and went on for fifty feet or so.

As the street was full of people, passing up and down, it was an easy matter for Petey to gain his new position without allowing the pair to get their eyes on him.

Then, when the car came along, as the two got on at the rear platform, the boy hopped on at the front one, and as he gained his position before they fairly boarded the vehicle, the couple would have had to be far more acute and vigilant than they really were to have their suspicions excited. In fact there wasn't anything further from their thoughts than the idea that they were being shadowed, so the boy's task was not a difficult one.

"By the way, I never thought to ask you if you knew where this party lives," the bruiser remarked after the car went on its way.

"Oh, yes, I know. He lives in an elegant house next door to the church—the parsonage, I think they call it," she replied.

"I saw him go in after the services were over," she continued. "I lingered in the church as long as I dared, so as to do a little business. There was a big crowd there—a finer-dressed lot of dames I never saw anywhere, and yet I have put in an appearance at a great many swell affairs in my time. I got three leathers all right, and got away with 'em, too, and would you believe it, the three wallets didn't give up ten dollars all told!"

And from the way the woman spoke it was evident she felt that she had been cruelly deceived.

"Yes, that is the way with a good many of the swells," the ruffian remarked.

"A good many of them put all they have got on their backs. I have been fooled in that way a half-a-dozen times—taken a great deal of pains, you know, to foller a well-dressed chap until I got a good chance to use a sand-bag on him, and then, maybe, only got a couple of dollars for my trouble."

"Yes, fine feathers don't always make fine birds as far as the ready money goes," the woman observed, and then, abruptly changing the subject she said:

"While we were walking up the street I have been thinking over this matter. You know I am a great hand to scheme and arrange my plans in advance?"

"Oh, yes, anybody that knows you understands that you have got a mighty good head on your shoulders!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

"I am very much obliged to you for the compliment," the woman remarked with a smile.

"And, really, I don't think you are very far out of the way, although I say it who shouldn't," she continued.

"In fact, I know I have got a good head, and it has carried me safely out of many a tight place."

"Not a doubt of it!"

"Now in regard to this little business, I can tell you, right now, that we are going on a wild goose chase; we are not going to make anything!" the woman declared in a very decided manner.

"If we don't try we will not, and you are safe in betting all you are worth on that too!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared, doggedly.

"You were always an obstinate fellow!" the woman retorted. "And when you once get an idea into your head it is hard work to get it out."

"That is the right way to be, hey?"

"No, it isn't!" the woman denied, bluntly.

"Be sure that your idea is right before you go ahead."

"But to come down to business. This minister is not a common kind of man and the game has got to be worked in an extremely careful manner."

"He can't be handled, you understand, as if he was a merchant or a private gentleman."

"No, I s'pose not," the Dangerous Blacksmith replied, in a doubtful way, and it was evident that his ideas on the subject were extremely hazy.

"Now, suppose I was to go to him and say

out bluntly: "I came about this Tarrytown case—I have proof that you were acquainted with the dead woman and I want to know what you are going to do about it?"

"Hully gee! that would be giving him the biggest kind of a bluff!" the bruiser declared.

"Yes, that is true, but unless I have made a great mistake in regard to the character of the man—and I don't believe I have—the bluff wouldn't work for a cent!" the woman exclaimed, emphatically.

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it! He is not one of your mealy-mouthed men to stand a thing off that kind."

"He would understand at once that it meant black-mail, and you can bet he would kick like a steer against it."

"Maybe he would, but these preachers are generally mightily afraid of getting mixed up in any woman scrape," the bruiser suggested.

"That is true, and if we had something to go on, possibly the bluff would go through," the woman remarked.

"But you must remember that we hav'n't, and if he makes a big kick all our cake would be dough."

"That is so; unless we kin skeer him right out of his boots at the first pop we don't stand much show to make a stake."

"I tell you I am certain that he isn't that kind of a man at all!" the woman declared, impatiently.

"As I said before, it is only a waste of time for us to go, but as you are so anxious about the thing I am willing to make the trial."

"Now then, this is the way I have figured the scheme out, and the only way, to my thinking, by which we stand a chance to do anything."

"I am not willing, mind you, to be handed over to the police, and then be hauled up before a judge on a black-mailing charge."

"No, it would be ugly!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared with a deprecating shake of his big head.

"I am going to play a safe game," the woman remarked. "I shall give him a ghost story to the effect that I am in the private detective line."

"Ah, yes, that is a good stall!" exclaimed the bruiser, surprised by the wit of the woman.

"I will explain, you see, that I happened to take into my head to look into this Tarrytown business, having an impression there was a mystery about the case which would be worth working up, and during my investigations I came across some facts which led me to suppose that he was interested in the matter, so I took the liberty of calling upon him in regard to the subject."

"Well, now, you kin bet yer life that that is the finest kind of a lay-out!" the bruiser declared.

"It strikes me that it isn't bad," the woman remarked with a great deal of complacency.

"If you notice, although I don't say much, yet I suggest a good deal."

"That is so."

"Now, then, if the minister is interested in the Tarrytown incident he will have to be a very cunning man indeed to keep from betraying the truth, although I think the chances are great that he will deny it, and I have very little hope of being able to do any business with him; still it will not be much trouble to make the trial."

"That is jest w'ot I was a-thinking," the Dangerous Blacksmith remarked.

And then he continued with the air of a philosopher.

"Nobody kin tell what they kin do until they tries, and the blokes w'ot never tries will be blamed sure not to do anything."

The woman laughed.

"You are right about that, and no mistake!" she affirmed.

"But, as far as I can see in regard to this matter, I don't think we stand one chance out of a hundred to make a success of it," she continued.

"Still, unpromising affairs sometimes turn out well, and schemes which appear to carry a fortune ruin all who have anything to do with them."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INTERVIEW.

DURING the conversation the car had passed the Grand Central Depot and turned into Madison avenue.

The woman had glanced out every now and then, keeping watch of their progress, and the bruiser, noticing the look, asked:

"Pretty near there, ain't we?"

"Yes, it is the next block, if I remember rightly."

The memory of the woman was not at fault, for on the next block stood a stately church—a magnificent building with sky-piercing spires.

"That is his church!" the woman said. "We will get out at the next street."

The man nodded assent.

This movement they carried out.

"Walk down the avenue with me, past the house, and wait on the next corner."

"All right," the Dangerous Blacksmith replied.

As the woman had said, the parsonage adjoined the church, and as the windows were brilliantly lighted it seemed as though it was likely the minister was at home.

"The bloke has mighty good quarters," the bruiser declared with an admiring glance at the handsome house.

"Oh, yes, he lives on the fat of the land, and why shouldn't a man who has brains enough to get ten thousand dollars a year?"

"Maybe he ain't worth it," the other suggested.

"What does it matter whether he is worth it or not so long as he can get it?" the woman retorted.

"You are right."

At this point the two arrived at the gate.

"Go in and I will moosey to the corner. Good luck to you, Sal!" the man exclaimed as he went on.

She ascended the steps, while the Dangerous Blacksmith went on to the corner where he came to a halt.

The boy spy had kept his eyes on the pair and when they got off the car on one side he alighted on the other.

As the two went down the avenue, as we have described, the boy pretended to proceed along the upper side of the cross street, but as soon as the pair were well on their way, he sneaked back, and came slowly after them on the other side of the street.

The avenue was brilliantly lighted, as there were four extra gas lamps in front of the church, so Petey had no trouble in keeping his eyes on his game, although on account of the flood of light, he was obliged to keep well in the rear, lest he should be discovered.

But great was the astonishment of the boy, though, when the woman ascended the steps of the parsonage; for he was smart enough to conjecture that the minister of the stately church resided in the handsome house which nestled under its wing.

"Jumping jingo!" cried Petey in amazement, "if she ain't a-going to call on der preacher, I don't want a cent!"

"Hey! dat is der biggest piece of cheek dat I ever heered of."

"W'ot does such a dame as she want with der gospel-spouter, I'd like to know?"

The boy was not acquainted with the woman, but from the fact that she was on intimate terms with the Dangerous Blacksmith, he had formed an extremely bad opinion of her.

Petey came to a halt the moment he saw the woman move toward the house, for he was very much puzzled by the action.

"Now, w'ot is der Blacksmith going to do, I'd like to know," he muttered.

"W'ot game are they up to, anyway?"

The boy had slunk into the shadow of a high flight of stone steps, so that he was well secured from the observation of the pair on the other side of the street if they had taken it into their heads to look around them, which, by the way, neither of them did.

They were so absorbed in their scheme that the idea of any one shadowing them had never entered their heads.

"I don't care for der woman, Dangerous is my mutton!" Petey muttered.

"But I don't dare to go arter him until she gets out of der way, 'cos she is a sharp-eyed dame, and as she got a good look at me, maybe she would know me ag'in, although I was rigged up to look like der Sheeney."

With these thoughts in his mind, it was with a great feeling of relief that Petey perceived the Dangerous Blacksmith come to a halt on the next corner, and from the way in which he took up a position, with his back against the stone fence of the corner house, the boy quickly came to the conclusion that the man intended to wait until the woman came out of the house.

"This'ere is all hunky then!" he muttered gleefully.

"All I have got to do is to lay low here until they go on ag'in, and then come the shadow act on them, same as afore."

So the boy settled back into the gloom and watched the woman enter the minister's house.

When the servant responded to the ring, Mrs. Slam asked if Mr. Lecount was in, and said if he was, she begged the privilege of speaking with him upon an important business matter.

As the woman was well-dressed, and nicely spoken, quite the lady, the servant admitted her without hesitation, and then proceeded to summon his master.

Mrs. Slam was showed into a small room, a sort of office, at the end of the hall, and had hardly time to look around her when the reverend gentleman made his appearance.

As the woman had said, Mr. Lecount was an unusually imposing and handsome man; a gentleman, evidently, born and bred; had a noble face, yet a close, and careful observer would have detected signs of weakness about the mouth and chin, which would have given rise to the suspicion that in an emergency the man would be lacking in resolution and will-power.

The woman rose and made a polite salutation

when the minister entered, to which he responded courteously.

"I desire to speak with you, sir, on an important matter," she said. "And it is desirable that our conversation should not be overheard."

The gentleman looked a little surprised at this beginning, but replied immediately:

"Pray be seated, madam, and do not be under any apprehension in regard to being overheard, for there is no danger of any such thing. You can speak freely."

The minister's voice was rich and melodious, and he spoke in the well-modulated tones of the practiced orator.

"I am glad to hear it, for the matter upon which I wish to speak is a very important one, indeed," the woman observed, as she resumed her seat.

"I am all attention, madam," the minister remarked, politely, as he seated himself in an arm-chair.

"The business that I follow is rather a peculiar one," she said, employing all her arts to become as agreeable as possible.

"I am in the private detective line."

"Yes, madam," and the gentleman looked inquiringly at the visitor, evidently completely at a loss to guess what business a woman engaged in such a business could have with him.

"I have been working up this Tarrytown case," she announced.

"Ah, yes," he said, with a nod, and from the expression upon his face it seemed as if he did not understand what she meant by the Tarrytown affair.

"You are acquainted with all the particulars, of course," she continued.

"Excuse me!" he remarked, plainly puzzled, "but I must really ask you to explain, for I do not understand exactly to what you refer."

"Why, to this case of the young woman who was found drowned at Tarrytown—this Mrs. Trevanion," Mrs. Slam explained, and as she spoke she watched the face of the minister closely, but not a single sign could she detect to denote that he took the slightest interest in the matter.

"Ah, yes, now that you explain, I recall that I read something about the matter in the newspapers, but, as a rule, I pay very little attention to anything of the kind."

"It was a melancholy case—a young life so suddenly blotted out," he continued with a grave shake of the head, while a sad expression appeared on his features.

"It always distresses me greatly to read about such things, for the newspaper gentlemen, in all matters of the kind, seem to delight in piling horrors on horror's head, and so I seldom read the accounts through."

"I just glance at the head lines so as to comprehend the case, for I think it is my duty to keep in touch with the world, but I shrink from reading all of the sad particulars."

"Of course it is a part of my business to post myself in regard to all matters of the kind, and I came to see you about this case, for, from certain things which I learned concerning it, I got the impression that you were interested in the matter," and as the woman made the statement her keen eyes were fixed intently upon Mr. Lecount's face.

"You got the impression that I was interested in the matter?" the minister exclaimed, and if ever genuine surprise was manifest in the face of a human being, then it shone on Mr. Lecount's features now.

The thought immediately came to the sharp-eyed confidence-woman—so good a judge of human nature—that it was not possible the look of amazement could be assumed.

If it was, then no actor that ever faced the footlights could compare with this pulpit orator.

"Yes, I was led to suppose so," the woman remarked in a cautious way, and with a mysterious shake of the head, which seem to imply that if she chose to speak out freely she could make some astounding disclosures.

"Well, really, I must say that this is the most surprising thing that has ever been brought to my notice!" Mr. Lecount declared, drawing a long breath.

"I am utterly amazed!"

"Then you are not interested in the affair?" the woman asked, affecting to be much surprised.

"How is it possible for me to be?" the minister exclaimed.

"To the best of my knowledge I never saw, or even heard, of the unfortunate woman until I read the account of her untimely taking off in the newspapers."

"Then she was not a member of your church?"

"Certainly not!" the reverend gentleman declared, immediately.

"You must remember the profession she followed," he continued, gently.

"True, she was an actress," the woman remarked in a reflective way, as though she had just recalled the circumstances to her mind.

"Yes, and that fact would have prevented her from becoming one of my flock," the minister explained.

"While I, personally, have no doubt that there are a great many good people who are stage players, yet the life and its associations

—particularly the associations—are not such as to recommend the stage people for membership in such a congregation as the one over which I have the honor to preside."

"And you were not acquainted with the lady before the time when you assumed charge here?" Mrs. Slam said, in a very insinuating way.

"Oh, no; I have been pastor here for twenty-five years, and as the account, if I remember rightly, put the unfortunate woman's age at twenty-three or four, you can clearly see it would not have been possible for me to have been acquainted with her before I came here."

"Yes, yes, that is very true!" And then the confidence-woman shook her head in a sober way.

"I declare that I am completely puzzled, and I don't really know what to make of this affair," she continued.

"You see I am employed by certain parties, friends of Mrs. Trevanion, who are desirous of unraveling the mystery which surrounds her death, and in some way they got the notion that you would be able to throw some light on the subject."

"Really, I think this is the most astounding mistake that I have ever heard of in all my experience!" the reverend gentleman declared, shaking his head in utter bewilderment.

"Pray, tell me, how could it be possible that any one should fall into such an error?"

"I don't know the facts in the case so I am not able to tell you how the parties came to their conclusions," the woman replied.

"My instructions were to come to you—explain why I came, and you would give me some information."

"Upon my word this is a most extraordinary affair, and I cannot for the life of me understand how any one could arrive at such a conclusion!" Mr. Lecount declared.

"There is one point, by the way, which I learned, and have neglected to mention. My employers became aware of the fact that a certain party who, they have reason to believe, was connected with the girl in some way, caused to be mailed to you a newspaper in which the account of the girl's death was marked so as to call your attention to it."

"Yes, that is the truth," the minister replied, immediately.

"I did receive such paper and was surprised to find that an article was marked; but I did not allow my mind to dwell on the matter at all, for I regarded the sending of the marked copy as being the act of a crank who had nothing better to do."

"Men who are in public life get used to little incidents of the kind."

"There are always a lot of visionary creatures, unfortunate wretches, who are a little disordered in their minds, who sometimes think themselves called upon to instruct ministers in their duties, and once in a while so offensive does the annoyance become that it is necessary to call upon the police in order to put a stop to it."

"Yes, I comprehend."

"And in this case that was the conclusion to which I came; under the circumstances I couldn't very well come to any other."

"Yes, of course."

That the man was speaking the truth the woman did not for a moment doubt, for she flattered herself that not even the most experienced actor could deceive her in such a case.

She was not particularly disappointed, for she had not expected to meet with success, but it was not because she thought the minister was innocent of all knowledge of the affair, for that was a contingency which she had not contemplated.

Having now become satisfied that nothing could be done, she withdrew as gracefully as possible. She thanked the reverend gentlemen for his courtesy, expressed her regret that the parties who had employed her had been foolish enough to attach any attention to the whimsical act of a crank and then departed.

"Quite a superior woman!" was the minister's comment.

"Dangerous is always making some bad break of this kind!" the woman muttered as she walked down the street.

CHAPTER XXII.

BAFFLED.

THE Dangerous Blacksmith was waiting with eager impatience for his messenger.

"W'ot luck, Sal?" he cried, as she came up to him.

"None at all—just as I expected!"

"You don't tell me?"

"I am giving it to you on the dead straight!" the woman replied, dropping with easy familiarity into the street slang.

"He wouldn't have it?"

"Not for a cent!"

"Did you try to put the screws on?"

"There wasn't any chance. The man doesn't know anything about the business."

"Maybe he was fooling you," the Dangerous Blacksmith suggested.

"Such maybe ain't flying at this time of year

when I am around," the woman replied, flipantly.

"Oh, come now, you are not so blamed smart but w'ot some cove might be able to git the best on you, particularly a high and mighty bloke of this kind."

"You don't know what you are talking about, Dangerous!" Sheeney Sal declared.

"No man of this kind could pull the wool over my eyes!"

"I can tell you that this minister knows no more about the Tarrytown business than a child unborn!"

"Did you throw the marked newspaper at him?" the bruiser asked, evidently very much disappointed.

"Yes, and he had taken it to be the work of some crank, for, as he said, men in public life, like himself, were very often pestered by such people."

"And I know how that is, Dangerous, for the last time I was in jail, while I was waiting for my trial, all sorts of cranks, both men and women, called on me, the most of them with some ridiculous and absurd notions."

"One man, an old gray-headed idiot, wanted to marry me after I got out of my trouble, so as to save my eternal soul, and a miserable old wreck of a woman insisted that I was her sister, who ran away from England twenty years ago."

"You can't tell me anything about cranks and what they will do, you know!" the woman said in conclusion.

"But these two men that I got arter ain't no cranks, you bet! not by a blamed sight!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared.

"They had a motive in sending the marked paper, or else they would not have done it!" he asserted.

"Such ducks as they are don't do things of that kind just for sport!"

"You know the men and I don't, so, of course, you are a better judge of the matter than I am," Sheeney Sal responded.

"But this one thing I am certain of—as far as the minister is concerned he doesn't know anything about the matter—that is, he thinks he doesn't; and if he does, he don't know it."

"That is all in my eye—a talking in that way!" the Dangerous Blacksmith declared. "How could the old bloke know anything about the affair and yet not know it?"

"That does look like a conundrum which would be pretty hard to guess, doesn't it?" the woman asked with a laugh.

"Well, I should smile!"

"The only explanation of this riddle, as far as I can see, is that the men who sent the paper have got some game which they are going to work, and the sending of the newspaper was just a preliminary step."

"Ye—yes," the Dangerous Blacksmith said, slowly, his dull wits evidently all at sea.

"Didn't I understand you to say that they did not care whether you made a break for the minister or not?"

"That is O. K. They laughed at me when I tried to put the screws on them."

"They could afford to laugh," the woman declared. "They knew they had things fixed so you could not possibly make anything."

"Curse the luck!" cried the ruffian, abruptly, and with savage earnestness. "Don't I wish I could get a hold on 'em, somehow!"

"I kin see now that they made a cat'spaw out of me! They roped me into the game without letting me know anything about the bigness of it."

"Is that so?" Sheeney Sal asked, surveying the man's face with eager curiosity.

"Yes, you bet yer sweet life it is!" the Dangerous Blacksmith cried, angrily.

"They made the biggest kind of a fool out of me. I did the job, cheap, never calculating that there was going to be many ducats in the affair for anybody, but now I am beginning to git the idee into my noddle that the work I did will give these two skins a chance to pull off a big stake, and they have fixed the thing so that I will not be in it, either, blast their black hearts!"

The woman cast a rapid glance around so as to be sure there was no one within earshot, and then, dropping her voice to a cautious whisper, said:

"Dangerous, was there anything crooked about the death of the girl?"

"Say, don't you ask me any questions, and I won't tell you no lies!" the man replied, in a dogged way.

"I feckon from the way you speak that it wasn't all right."

"Well, I am not giving anything away," he retorted, in a sulky tone.

"You are afraid to trust me, eh?" the woman said, with a sneer.

"Oh, I ain't any more afeard to trust you than I am to trust anybody else," he retorted. "But I think a man is a fool to give anything away to anybody."

"You are right, and for once in your life you have said something sensible. Do not confide in any one. The man whom you believe to be your bosom friend will betray you—the woman

who swears that you are dearer to her than all the world beside, and that never in her life has she loved any one but your own precious self, will give you to your enemies when she gets tired of your caresses," the woman exclaimed, with bitter accent.

"Very wise indeed you are to keep your secrets to yourself!"

"The jig is up as far as I am concerned, I s'pose," the Dangerous Blacksmith remarked, in a reflective way.

"The only chance I had to git into the game was to ring in by gitting at the preacher, and as that lay-out is knocked in the head I don't see how I kin come in."

"Of course you couldn't hope to make anything by threatening to squeal on your pals when it was you who really did the job," the woman remarked.

"Yes, and that is jest where they have got me—got me where my hair is short!" the Dangerous Blacksmith exclaimed, indignantly.

"They were smart to work the trick in that way."

"You bet yer sweet life they were, and I was the biggest fool in the world to let them rope me into sich a skin game, but I will know a blamed sight better the next time."

"But let's be going! The game is all U. P. and there isn't any use of our wasting any more time. I am much obliged to you all the same, and I will do as much in return some time," he said in conclusion.

"That is all right."

A car came along at this moment and the pair got on board.

The street was so brilliantly lighted that the boy from his hiding-place had been able to watch the movements of the two and when the car started he came out from the shadow of the stoop.

"Now I am going to be left on this racket!" he exclaimed.

"I can't chase arter dat car and git on board, for the odds are big that the two would catch onto de game!"

"You kin bet yer sweet life dat dey ain't no slouches, either one on dem, and if I tried any racket of dat kind dey would be dead sart'in to smell a mice!"

For a moment the boy was puzzled, but he was a quick-witted youngster and soon decided upon a course of action.

As it happened he had noticed that the car only contained three or four passengers, which was something unusual, for the line does a large business.

"Dit car ain't going to break no records on dis trip!" he exclaimed. "For dere ain't many passengers aboard, and it's going to stop for all it can git, so if I go along in de next one, maybe, when I git to de Grand Central Depot, if dere happens to be a crowd, the first car will stop long enuff to let de second one catch up wid it, and I can get a chance to get on de front platform, same as I was afore, widout the two catching onto de game."

"And dat will give me time too to find out de name of dis yer' gent w'ot de woman went for to see."

He glanced up the avenue and saw the lights of the next car gleaming in the distance, it being but a few minutes behind the other, so he hurried across the street and rung the minister's bell.

When the servant came to the door he put on an air of brisk business and asked:

"Say, does Mister Jacobs live here?"

When the servant replied in the negative he affected to be much astonished.

"And dis is next door to de church, and dat is w'ot de man said!" he declared. "Who does live here? Maybe I ain't got de name right."

Then the servant explained that it was the residence of the Reverend Mr. Brazil Lecount, the pastor of the church next door.

"And you don't know of no Mister Jacobs?"

The servant replied in the negative.

"I bet the bloke made some mistake 'bout de directions!" Petey exclaimed, and then departed.

"W'ot did de woman want wid de minister?" the boy muttered in wonder as he made his way to the corner where he boarded the car when it came along.

Petey had made a shrewd calculation.

The car on which the Dangerous Blacksmith and his companion took passage, arrived at the Grand Central Depot just as the crowd of people from a new-arrived train came pouring out, so the vehicle waited long enough to enable the passengers to get on board, and the second car came up to it.

The boy was thus afforded an opportunity to gain the front platform of the waiting car without danger of attracting the observation of the two whom he was shadowing.

The car went on its way down-town.

At Fourteenth street the woman got out, and as Petey noticed that she went down the street, in the direction from which she came, he jumped immediately to the conclusion that she was going to her home.

"You kin bet yer sweet life dat I have got onto this racket!" he declared.

"Dangerous went for de dame for to get her to call on der preacher man, and now dat de

business is done she has gone back home ag'in, and dat put her out of der game, see?"

"Now where is dis bloke going?"

Petey "wrestled" with this question for some time, arguing in this way:

"Don't look as if he was going back to where he come from, for he would have got off 'way up-town if dat had been his game."

The solution to the riddle was destined soon to come, for after the car reached the Bowery the Dangerous Blacksmith got off and entered one of the saloons which abound in that particular locality.

Petey was well posted in regard to this portion of the town, for he had been brought up in the neighborhood, and he knew that the saloon into which the ruffian had gone bore as bad a reputation as any liquor-store on the Bowery, without exception.

It was a headquarters for pugilists, lower-class sporting-men and crooks; just the sort of a place where a man like the Dangerous Blacksmith would be certain to feel completely at home.

Petey watched the bruiser enter the saloon, and then he took up a position in a doorway near by, so that it would not be possible for the ruffian to leave without coming under his notice, then fell to cogitating in regard to the situation.

"Maybe his nibs, the detective, will be able to make something out of this 'ere thing, but it is too much for me!" the boy declared.

"Why a bloke like this 'ere Dangerous Blacksmith should want to send a dame to see a high-toned rooster like dat minister up on de avenue is too rich for my blood, and I can't make puffin' out of it."

For fully ten minutes Petey remained on the watch, and then, as the bruiser did not make his appearance, he concluded it would be a good idea for him to see what the man was doing.

Producing his newspapers he took up the role of a newsboy again, marching into the saloon and "boring"—as he would have expressed it—the inmates to buy.

The Dangerous Blacksmith was in the rear room of the saloon, which was provided with tables and chairs for the accommodation of its patrons, engaged in a game of cards with three fellows of about the same class as himself, and the boy soon came to the conclusion that the bruiser was booked for a long stay.

"Dat racket is all over, and I reckon dere isn't any use of my hanging out 'round here any longer," Petey decided.

"The quicker I put der fly cop onto de game de better!"

The boy was prompt to act upon this resolution, and twenty minutes later he knocked at the door of Joe Phenix's apartments.

The detective, being alone, admitted the boy, and listened with the utmost attention to his story.

"You have done well!" the man-hunter remarked at the conclusion of the recital.

"I should not be surprised if this information proved to be of considerable value to me."

"I would be glad of dat for I did my level best to work der racket to der queen's taste!" Petey declared, glowing with pride at the approving words of the man, whom he regarded as being a head and shoulders above all ordinary men.

Joe Phenix pondered over the situation for a few minutes.

The description which the boy had given of the woman enabled the detective to recognize that it was the wife of the Dangerous Blacksmith.

"Why did she visit such a man as this eminent divine?" he mused.

"Can it be that the visit has anything to do with the game that this Trevanion is endeavoring to play?"

"At present there does not seem to be any connection between the two, but I have not got a clew good enough to warrant my setting up as a judge."

"It will be safe though to go on the assumption that the minister is connected with the game."

Acting on this idea Joe Phenix instructed the boy to keep a close watch on the minister's house, until he was relieved from duty.

The boy departed in high glee, proud of the responsibility reposed in him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ENGLISHMAN'S TALE.

PETHEY went straight up-town, and, after making a careful survey of the surroundings, took up a position on the steps of a house on the opposite side of the way from the minister's abode.

He was careful though to go six houses further up the street, for he reasoned that if he took a position directly opposite to the house, some one might notice him, and so suspicion would be excited that he was playing the spy.

The boy was uncommonly shrewd, and had sense enough to calculate closely in regard to all such chances as this.

He had not been in his position over ten minutes when the Englishman, Lorraine Tre-

vanion, alighted from a car and approached the minister's house.

Petey recognized him immediately from the description which Joe Phenix had given.

"Geel!" cried the boy, in amazement. "Now this 'ere jist gits me! I reckon the boss fly-cop did not expect that this bloke was going to turn up so soon!"

Trevanion rung the bell, and when the servant came, announced that he wished to have an interview with the reverend gentleman in regard to an important business matter.

The servant was favorably impressed by the caller, for the Englishman had a pleasing way with him, and so he was conducted into the little reception room, where he was soon joined by the minister.

Leaving the boy to his lonely vigil, we will relate the particulars of the interview between the two gentlemen.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Lecount?" the Englishman asked, rising and making a courtly bow as he spoke.

"You have, sir," was the minister's response.

"I am a stranger in this country, being an Englishman by birth, and so am not blessed with friends to consult in regard to a certain matter in which I am deeply interested, therefore I have taken the liberty of calling upon you, to ask your counsel."

"Pray be seated," said Mr. Lecount, courteously. "It will give me great pleasure, sir, to be of assistance to you."

Trevanion bowed and resumed his seat, while the minister took the easy-chair by the center table.

"I am about to speak of a rather delicate family matter, and I trust there is no danger of my words being overheard," Trevanion observed with a glance at the door which was not tightly closed.

"You can speak freely, sir," the minister replied. "There isn't any danger that any inmate of my household will play the eavesdropper."

"It is not on my own account that I am cautious," the Englishman explained. "For, personally, it does not matter to me."

"I comprehend."

"You, as a minister, are better calculated to give advice in regard to a delicate matter of this kind than an ordinary man, no matter how wise he may be, for this is an affair where conscience comes in play," Trevanion remarked.

"Ah, yes, I presume that is the truth if it is a matter of conscience."

"My story goes back some twenty odd years," the Englishman began, while Mr. Lecount settled himself back in his chair prepared to listen with the utmost attention.

"And in order that you may understand how affairs stand at present I must relate to you the story of a young college student."

The minister nodded in order to show that he was paying due attention.

"This young man was from one of the Western States, and although not of a wealthy family yet he had managed by his own personal efforts to put by money enough to enable him to come to Harvard College."

"Harvard was my college too," Mr. Lecount observed.

"Yes, I am aware of the fact," Trevanion remarked in a peculiar, dry way, and there was something in his tone which grated disagreeably on the ears of the minister.

"This young man was highly favored by nature," the Englishman continued.

"Physically he was almost perfect, and in mental gifts a match for any man in his class."

"He was studying for a lawyer, and all who knew anything about him predicted that he would one day rank high, for he had everything in his favor."

"The professors, knowing how he was situated in regard to money, did all they could to help him along, and during his last year one of them got him employment as a clerk at a summer hotel in the White Mountains, during his vacation, you understand."

Trevanion paused for a moment as if to collect his thoughts.

A shade appeared on the expressive face of the minister, and he fixed his large, dark eyes earnestly on the Englishman.

"At this summer hotel the young student met his fate in the shape of one of the dining-room girls, a country lassie employed to wait on the table."

The shade upon the features of the minister deepened, and the lines about his handsome mouth became hard and stern.

"She was a tall, handsome girl, as physically perfect in her way as the young student was in his, and although she was in no way a suitable match for such a man as the student, for she came of a mean, low, miserable family, yet he fell so madly in love with her that when he wooed the maid he would not take no for an answer, although she frankly told him that she did not care anything for him, and did not believe she ever would."

"Young men will be rash," the minister observed, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"At last the girl yielded to his solicitations, influenced by her brother, a wily countryman,

who was shrewd enough to comprehend that it was likely the college boy, with his wonderful natural gifts, would make a great name, and fully aware that his sister was never likely to get such another chance."

"The pair were married at the close of the hotel season—secretly married, for the brother had wit enough to see that it would embarrass the student in his upward career if the fact of the marriage became known to the world."

"A few days only did the student remain with his wife and then he was obliged to go back to college, leaving her to dwell with her brother on the little farm in the wild New Hampshire hills."

"The young man graduated with the highest honors, and having made a favorable impression on the father of one of his classmates, was offered a good position in the office of the gentleman, who was a well-known western judge."

"Flushed with his success, he sought his young bride. He had been absent six months, and he had but a month to remain with her before going West."

"It was his idea to arrange for her to remain with her brother until he could make a home for her in his new abiding-place."

"She willingly agreed to this; in fact, the unwelcome impression came to him that she did not care whether she ever went West or not—that really she would prefer to remain where she was."

"This young man was no fool, although he had allowed himself to become blinded by love; but now that the first transports of his passion were over, he began to see matters as they really were."

"His idol was only clay, and very common clay too. She had married him because her brother had persuaded her so to do, and now she rather repented it, although she was such a dull, stolid girl, that she did not really care much about the matter."

"Before the month was over the young man fully realized what a mistake he had made. He had bound himself for life to a common, illiterate girl, fit only to be the mate of a plowboy or a hod-carrier. She was beginning to develop a great fondness for liquor too, and the young husband began to be apprehensive that if it kept on she would become a common drunkard."

The cunning brother who was responsible for the match, saw how the land lay, and resolved to profit by it, so he made a proposition to the almost broken-hearted young man.

"Mag is going the same way as her mother," he declared. "The old woman died a drunkard, and I think Mag is going to travel the same road. That is the reason why I was so anxious to get her married to you, but the thing ain't turned out the way I thought it would at all."

"She don't care anything for you, and she is just crazy for liquor, and it is my belief that you will never get any good out of her."

"Now then, as I feel a little responsible for getting you into the scrape, although I thought I was doing something for the best, I will tell you how I think the thing had better be arranged."

"Leave Mag here; I will take care of her, and do all I can to make her let liquor alone; you go out West and send me what you can spare for her board and clothes."

"A year or so will tell the story. If she don't turn over a new leaf you would be a fool to ever attempt to live with her, for she would only drag you down, and you will never be able to make a name for yourself."

"A rising young fellow like you are, couldn't get along with a drunken wife!"

"The unhappy husband was obliged to admit that the burden would be a hard one to bear, and the brother said in conclusion:

"I will take care of her as long as she lives and I will give you my word that she will never trouble if you can contrive to send me enough to support her."

"I was partly responsible for getting you into the scrape, and now I will do all I can to make it as light for you as possible."

"The unfortunate young man thanked the brother for his offer and departed."

"In the West he flourished, and regularly he sent the money for the support of the wretched girl to whom he had been unwise enough to bind himself."

"Six months went by; during that time the brother had also become addicted to liquor, and in a drunken quarrel, in his own house, one day with his boon companions one of them was mortally wounded, and he blamed both the brother and sister for his hurts, although he said it was the brother who gave the mortal wound."

"Both of them fled; the authorities made little effort to trace them, for the affair took place in a remote country district, and the rulers of the town did not care to incur any expense they could avoid, particularly as the victim was a worthless fellow without friends."

"From that day to this neither the brother or sister have ever been heard of, and whether they are alive or dead no one knows."

"The unfortunate young man, who had been entrapped into the marriage, undoubtedly read the particulars of this affair in the newspapers, for no more money came from him."

"I presume he thought that the crime had made him a free man, and, most certainly, he ought to have been released, for he had been gulled by the brother into the marriage, for the cunning rascal knew well enough that the girl was addicted to liquor."

"It is a sad story?" Trevanion said in conclusion.

CHAPTER XXIV. A REVELATION.

MR. LECOUNT shook his head in a grave way, and a mournful look appeared on his face.

"Yes, you are quite right, sir, it is a sad story indeed," he remarked.

"I presume you are wondering how it is that I have become interested in the matter," Trevanion observed.

"Well, no, my mind did not come to that, although it is natural that it should."

"The brother and sister managed to reach New York and there in the great city felt safe from pursuit."

"If the authorities of the country town had made any efforts to cause their arrest, it is probable that they would not have escaped the New York bloodhounds, but, as I said, the country people were too stingy to offer any reward for the apprehension of the fugitives, and it takes money to set the wheels of justice in motion."

"Yes, I presume so, although I have so little knowledge of the subject that I am not competent to form a correct opinion."

"The brother was a strong, muscular fellow who had been used to hard work all his life so he had very little trouble in getting work in New York, and he became a longshoreman."

"The tragedy had one good effect, it made the pair more careful how they indulged in liquor, and although both drank freely, yet they did not make perfect beasts of themselves as they had been in the habit of doing."

"Out of evil good cometh sometimes," the minister observed.

"The brother considered that he was a very unlucky man, for the tragedy, in which he had played so prominent a part, had totally destroyed the work which he had planned so carefully."

"He had brought about the marriage between the young college man and his sister, in order to secure some one to take care of the girl, and he had managed it so that the money would come through his hands, and it was his calculation that the sum would be amply sufficient to support not only the girl but himself."

"Yes, I comprehend; a cunning, plotting, knave."

"But after what had happened, that source of income was completely cut off. Both of them were dead to the world."

"He dared not attempt to open communication with the husband for fear that it would lead to his discovery, and, he had no mind to go back to New Hampshire to stand trial for murder, for although the authorities had not troubled themselves in regard to his capture, there was no doubt that if he got into the hands of the law he would be punished quickly enough."

"The hand of Fate set at naught all his cunning," the minister observed gravely.

"Yes, and from this case may be drawn the lesson that the evil-doer shall not prosper."

"Very true."

"Possibly you would like to know what became of the young husband who was in such a peculiar manner released from his irksome bonds?"

"Yes, it is an interesting subject," Mr. Lecount remarked, and there was a strange look on his face, and a strange ring in his deep voice.

"In the western town where he had taken up his abode he was looked upon as a rising man, but before he had resided there a year he became a religious convert, abandoned the law and began to study for the ministry."

"If the world at large had known of the sad heart which the brilliant young man carried in his bosom, perhaps they would not have wondered as much as they did at this unexpected change."

"One of the leading members of the church which the young man joined was a wealthy widow, a thoroughly good woman, and she took the greatest possible interest in the young man."

"In fact, it was her personal solicitations which led the young man to experience a change of heart, and when he thought of studying for the ministry, she offered to defray all his expenses if he would give up the law and enter upon such a course."

"He accepted the offer, began his studies, and just as he was pronounced qualified to begin to preach the Gospel, his patroness died; but she left a will bequeathing fifty thousand dollars to him on condition that he should take the name of her deceased husband, as she felt assured that his career as a minister would make the name renowned."

"He accepted the condition, changed his name in a proper legal fashion, and in a very few years convinced the world at large that the widow had not made a mistake in her estimate of his abilities."

"A very interesting story," the minister remarked, with a grave look on his face.

"I suppose you are wondering, though, what connection I can possibly have with this story," the Englishman observed.

"Well, it is not apparent," Mr. Lecount affirmed in a thoughtful way.

"The original name of the young man, by the way, was Edmund Tyrrel."

"Yes," said the minister, with a far-away look in his dark eyes.

"Now I will proceed to explain how I am interested in the matter."

"I have described how the brother and sister fled, like thieves in the night, anxious to escape from the vengeance of an outraged law."

"As I stated, in this wilderness of houses, the metropolis of the New World, they found a secure hiding-place, and here in New York, three months after the fugitives arrived in the city, the sister gave birth to a baby girl."

"A child!" the minister exclaimed in a strange, peculiar tone.

"Yes, and a most unwelcome child it was to both the mother and the uncle, and so they took measures to get rid of it as soon as possible."

"And here again the scheming brother cursed the ill-luck which attended him, for if he had not been obliged to conceal himself under a false name he might have got a good round sum out of the father."

"Yes, undoubtedly, for the unfortunate father's heart would have gone out to the helpless little babe!" Mr. Lecount declared, his deep tones giving ample evidence of how much he was affected by the recital.

"But the shadow of the gallows hung dark over the life of the schemer, and he did not dare to attempt to open communication with the husband, and father, for fear that he might lay himself open to the grip of the law."

"Yes, I understand how he felt; was the dread apprehension that the officers of the law were on his track constantly haunted him, and he was like a man afraid of his shadow."

"Exactly! he was a nervous, cowardly fellow at the best, and the thought never came into his head that the authorities of the town where the murder had occurred, would not make any strenuous effort to capture him."

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all," Mr. Lecount observed with a sad smile.

"The child was a burden, and both brother and sister were anxious to get rid of it as soon as possible."

"The heartless wretches!" the minister exclaimed in a burst of indignation.

"The father would have regarded that child as a gift from heaven and prized it above all earthly things!"

"My soul fairly sickens when I think there can be creatures in the world so destitute of the common feeling of humanity!"

"Ah, my dear sir, this precious pair were very low down in the social scale; in many respects but a little above the level of the brute," the Englishman declared.

"Yes, I believe from what you have said that you are right, although it is a sad admission to make," Mr. Lecount remarked with a mournful shake of the head.

"The babe was pretty and interesting, so the brother, who took charge of the matter, had no difficulty in finding a home for it, through the assistance of the midwife who attended to the mother."

"Another patient of hers had the misfortune to lose her baby, and was anxious to adopt one, so an arrangement was made for this woman to take the child."

"She was English by birth, her husband a tradesman in fair circumstances, and a good home was thus secured for the child."

"It was a fortunate thing for the helpless infant that she fell into good hands."

"She was carefully brought up, and until she was seventeen years old had no suspicion that she was an adopted child."

"But just after she reached her seventeenth year, her supposed father became involved in a disastrous speculation which swept away all his earnings, and in his despair had committed suicide."

"Unhappy man!" the minister exclaimed.

"And oh! how rash—how unwise to rush uncalled and unprepared into the other world!"

"The wife was not strong enough to stand the shock, and after a brief illness she, too, died."

"Misfortunes seldom come singly!" the pastor observed.

"And on her death-bed she told the girl the story of her life."

"What a revelation it must have been to the child!" Mr. Lecount exclaimed.

"Of course the story was not a correct one, for the woman could only relate what she had been told, giving the mother's name as Margaret Williams, instead of Margaret Tyrrel."

"The brother, after arriving in New York, had changed his name from William Enlight to George Williams, and he pretended that his sister had been married to a cousin of the same name, a sailor who had been lost at sea."

"I understand. Fearing pursuit, he hid himself behind a screen of lies."

"Yes; the girl, thus thrown upon her own resources, tried in various ways to make a living and finally went upon the stage."

"Upon the stage—became an actress!" exclaimed the minister, evidently pained by the disclosure.

"Yes, and upon the stage I met and married her, and this is how I came to be connected with this affair," the Englishman explained.

"Before we married, though, she told me her story so that I would understand I was marrying a girl whose own mother had heartlessly given her up."

"But that was not her fault; the sins of the parent should not be visited upon the children, the Good Book to the contrary notwithstanding," Mr. Lecount observed, gently.

"I agree with you, and I can say that the cloud which hung around her birth did not worry me at all," Trevanion declared.

"Still, as events proved, it was for the best that the disclosure was made," he continued. "For a short time ago I made the acquaintance of a gentleman with whom I became so intimate that one day I related to him the strange history of my wife, and you can judge of my surprise when he immediately said that he was familiar with all the details of the case, and could tell me the true history of it."

"That certainly was remarkably strange!" the minister declared, wonderingly.

CHAPTER XXV.

COMING TO THE POINT.

TREVANION nodded assent.

"Yes, it is like a romance; still, you know, there is a very old saying that truth is stranger than fiction."

"I am aware of that, and do not attempt to dispute the correctness of the adage."

"This gentleman became possessed of the information in a very strange way," Trevanion remarked. "He is an Irishman by birth, by name, Captain Gordon Murphy, and is a soldier of fortune, who has served under a dozen different flags, so you will understand that he is a man of the world and one who is apt to do strange things at times."

"I comprehend," Mr. Lecount remarked. "I have read of such men, but never happened to meet one."

"The captain is one who keeps late hours, and upon returning to his rooms one night was accosted on the street by a wretched creature, in the shape of a man, who craved alms that might purchase liquor as he feared he was about to have an attack of the horrors."

"Oh, that such things can be!" the minister exclaimed.

"The captain's rooms were near at hand, and, acting on the impulse of the moment, he carried the wretched creature thither and dosed him liberally with brandy."

"The man was too far gone though for the liquor to produce its customary effect, and in a short time he was little better than a raving lunatic, but as the captain, during his adventurous career, had met with cases of the kind, he was well qualified to deal with the man, and so he brought him through the attack all right."

"During his ravings though, the man told the story of his life."

"It was the brother, William Enlight, and so when I confided to the captain the story of my wife's life, he was able to lift the cloud which enshrouded her parentage."

"Being thus put in possession of the facts, I went to New Hampshire, in order to verify the story, also made myself acquainted with all the particulars of the minister's career, my wife's father, and this is why I was able to relate the complete story to you."

"Ah, yes, I see," and Mr. Lecount closed his eyes for a moment in a wearied way, seemingly buried in deep thought.

Trevanion watched him with a self-satisfied look.

"Where is your wife now may I ask?" the minister questioned, after quite a long pause.

"Alas, poor Constance is dead," the Englishman declared in a tone full of sorrow.

"Dead! great heavens!" Mr. Lecount exclaimed, very much excited.

"Yes, she was the girl who was found drowned at Tarrytown—Constance Blakeley; Blakeley was her maiden name, and as she had made a stage reputation under that name she still used it, although after her marriage to me her name was really Constance Trevanion."

"Yes, yes, I understand! Great heavens! this seems too strange to be true!" the minister exclaimed in a great state of nervous excitement.

"I took the liberty of sending you a newspaper and I marked the account of the tragedy, so as to draw your attention to it."

"Ah, yes, I received it."

"I thought that when you read the description given of the girl, you would be shocked by her resemblance to her mother, for her uncle—who had evidently kept his eyes on her from the obscurity in which he dwelt—told the captain in his ravings that when he saw her on the stage he perceived she was the very image of what her mother was at her age."

The minister nodded in a dazed sort of way,

as though he did not know exactly what to say.

"Her death was a fearful shock to me," Trevanion declared, assuming to be very sorrowful.

"Yes, yes, I presume so," Mr. Lecount remarked, with a wearied air.

"My first impulse, after I discovered that the unknown suicide was my wife, was to write out the history of her life and give it to the public, so that all the world might read and wonder at its strangeness, but when I mentioned my thought to the captain, he objected in the most strenuous way.

"My dear fellow, you must not do that!" he declared.

"Think of the scandal which such a revelation would cause. Your wife's father holds his head as high as any man in the country, being one of the leading ministers of New York. Think of the sensation which such a revelation would create. All the newspapers would be full of it, and the world at large would gaze with wonder at the tale. Decidedly, dear boy, you ought not to do it!"

And at this point Trevanion paused and looked inquiringly at Mr. Lecount, as though he expected him to say something, but the minister did not open his mouth, merely gazed at the Englishman like a man who had been dazed by a heavy blow.

"Another point that my friend the captain urged was that, as it was probable the wretched woman, who married the man whom she knew she did not love, and then basely cast the child of the union out upon the mercies of an unfeeling world, was still living, the publication of the story would make known to her the fact that her legal husband was one of the great men of the metropolis, and it was very likely she would try to make something out of it, and my friend in touching tones pictured how dreadful it would be for the polished, cultured idol of the wealthy up-town church to be claimed as a husband by a wretched, miserable outcast from the slums of Water street."

The face of the minister was cold and hard, and a strange look was in his eyes, still he spoke not.

"I reflected upon what my friend said, and finally came to the conclusion that he was correct in his statement," Trevanion remarked.

"Then we talked the matter over, and at last came to the conclusion that I had better come to you, explain just how the affair stood, and ask your advice in regard to it."

"My advice?" Mr. Lecount said, his brow wrinkled by the dark lines of care.

"Yes, we may as well come directly to the point, and not beat about the bush, as there isn't anything to be gained by so doing," the Englishman remarked, a little impatiently.

"I am the husband of your daughter, for you are the Edmund Tyrrel who married the country girl in New Hampshire, years ago.

"I can bring you ample proof that the story I have told is true. The midwife who delivered the child to Mrs. Blakeley is still alive, and you can see her if you wish.

"She will tell you how she made arrangements for the adoption of the baby, and explain how it would be possible for her to identify the child, even after she had grown to womanhood.

"On the right foot the baby had six toes—that is, the little toe was double.

"If you recall the newspaper accounts of the Tarrytown tragedy, possibly you will remember that particular stress was laid upon the fact that the unknown girl possessed on the right foot a double little toe.

"Attention was called to this fact, before she was identified, by the authorities in charge of the case, in hopes that it would lead to the discovery as to who she was.

"The case is a perfectly clear one," the Englishman continued. "And if you have any doubts about the matter in any way, have the kindness to make them known, and I am sure I can clear them up."

"What do you require?" the minister asked, after a long pause, during which he seemed to be reflecting over the situation.

"Well, really, you are rather abrupt about the matter," Trevanion remarked.

"Still, I don't know but it is about as well for us to come directly to the point," he continued, in a reflective way.

"Of course, you are too sensible a man to come to the conclusion that I have taken the trouble to call upon you and explain this matter for the mere satisfaction of letting you know that I am acquainted with all the particulars of the affair."

"I presume not."

"And in order that you may understand just how I am situated, it is necessary for me to enter upon a little personal explanation."

Mr. Lecount nodded in an absent sort of way. "As I explained to you, I am an Englishman by birth and come of a good family," Trevanion said with an air of great dignity.

"My people are wealthy and there is a great probability that one of these days I will come in for a large estate.

"At present, though, I will have to admit that I am not well situated as far as financial matters are concerned," he continued, shaking his head with a regretful air.

"Young men will be young men, you know," he explained. "And after I left college I had the misfortune to get in with a rather fast set, and I must admit that the pace was a little too brisk for me.

My allowance, you understand, was not large enough to permit me to indulge in the expensive pleasures which were considered so necessary to existence by my company, and so the first thing I knew I found myself over head and ears in debt.

"It was not the first time that I had found myself in that unpleasant position and my people were tired of helping a lame dog over the stile, as the saying is, and as the bailiffs were hard after me with all sorts of writs and unpleasant legal papers of the kind calculated to interfere with a man's freedom, my friends came to the conclusion that the wisest thing they could do was to get me out of the country as quickly as possible.

"So I came to the States, my people sending me a regular allowance, but it was their idea that I ought to be able to get something to do here so as to be able to support myself."

And after making this announcement, Trevanion looked at the minister in an inquiring way.

"It seems to me that their expectations were not unreasonable ones," Mr. Lecount observed.

"No, I presume not, but still, somehow, I have been singularly unlucky in finding any suitable occupation," the Englishman declared. "Being a stranger to the country of course was against me, and my people at home did not like it because I did not find some favorable opening, and then, with the rashness which has always been my peculiar characteristic, I fell in love and married your daughter, an actress.

"One thing about myself I will say, and that is I have always been frank and honest in all my dealings, so after my love match was made I wrote to my people a full account of the affair.

"Now as they are all very religious—the kind of folks who think the entrance to a theater is the gate to the infernal regions—they were fearful angry that I should have dared to make an actress my wife, so I was promptly disowned and cast off.

"I took the matter coolly," Trevanion continued. "For thanks to my wife's being on the stage I got something to do in the theatrical money department, but since the awful death of my unfortunate little woman the life has become dreadfully distasteful to me, and after I learned the secret of my wife's birth the thought occurred to me that if I were to come to you with an explanation of all the circumstances of the case, you might feel inclined to do something for me," and as he finished the speech Trevanion smiled, blandly, at the other.

"Yes, I understand," the minister remarked, evidently ill at ease, and puzzled how to act.

"If report speaks true you are a very wealthy man, besides receiving a large yearly stipend, and, if I am not mistaken, you are absolutely alone in the world without kindred," Trevanion observed.

"That is the truth."

"If your daughter had lived she would have been your heir, and I as your daughter's husband surely have some claim upon you.

"I advance the idea with more freedom than I would under different circumstances," the Englishman continued in his smooth, oily way.

"If you were a man of family now, with a wife and children depending upon you, or even were you blessed with relatives with whom you had always been on friendly terms, I should feel a certain delicacy in bringing my claims to your notice; but as it is, really it seems to me that you could spare a little of your surplus wealth and never miss it.

"Now, I talked this matter over with Captain Murphy, who is a very clear-headed fellow, and a man in whose judgment I have a deal of confidence, and it was by his advice that I came to you and explained the situation.

"It was his idea that when you learned the truth you would be glad of the chance to do something for your daughter's husband.

"He said in his careless, soldier-like way, 'What is ten or fifteen thousand dollars to a man who is reported to be not only worth half a million, but sure of a ten thousand a year income.'

"If he is the man I take him to be he will be glad to make you a present of ten or fifteen thousand dollars for a starter, and then settle an allowance of three or four thousand dollars a year on you for life; so that your future will be secure."

"I replied that, under the circumstances, I couldn't very well attempt to drive any bargain with you. All I could do was to explain the circumstances and throw myself upon your generosity!" Trevanion exclaimed in conclusion with a fine burst of feeling.

The expression upon the grave face of the minister never changed as he listened to the specious words of his visitor.

Even an ordinary man, with no great amount of wisdom, could not have failed to understand the situation, and Mr. Lecount with his

wonderful mental powers was quick enough to grasp it.

He was in the toils of a blackmailer.

Strip aside the flowery generalities which the Englishman had used and he practically said:

"I want a certain sum of money, cash down, and a regularly yearly allowance of so much, and if you do not come to my terms I will cause the story of your life to be published in the newspapers, thus giving it to the world.

"You married a worthless woman, and took advantage of the fact that she committed a crime, which obliged her to hide herself from the world, to escape from the bonds which proved to be so galling, and as it is not certain that your wife is dead, the publication of your history may cause her to come forward and claim you for her husband."

This really was the substance of the visitor's language.

The shock had been a terrible one to the minister; his brain was in a whirl, and he knew not what to say.

Trevanion watched him for a few moments in silence, inwardly enjoying his victim's agony, for, according to his thinking, the more affected the minister was by the unexpected disclosure, the greater the chance that his carefully planned scheme would succeed in bringing him a golden harvest.

"Suppose you take a few days to think this matter over," the Englishman suggested, finding that Mr. Lecount hesitated to speak.

"There isn't any hurry about the matter, you know," he continued.

"Take a week to turn the affair over in your mind. I am not at all afraid that a man of your keen judgment will not come to a just decision.

"I feel sure that after you have had time to reflect upon the affair, and weigh all the particulars in your mind, you will see your way clear to oblige me.

"Of course, if you are wise, you will keep the matter to yourself, for it is not safe to trust such a secret to even a man's dearest friend.

"This day week I will come again."

And then the Englishman departed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WEIGHING THE CHANCES.

TREVANION left the minister's house in the best of spirits, for everything had progressed so well that he felt satisfied his game would succeed.

"I will nail him for ten thousand cash, pretty surely," he mused, as he waited at the corner for a car.

"Ten thousand cash, and about three thousand a year as long as the old man lives, and then there is a chance, too, that he will either arrange his estate so I will be paid the allowance for life, or else he will leave me a good round sum by will.

"Decidedly this is one of the most fortunate things that has ever occurred to me, and yet I have been counted a very lucky man all my life."

The car coming along at this moment put a stop to his meditations.

The Englishman boarded the vehicle, and at the same time Petey, who had come down on the other side of the street, got on the front platform.

Although he had no orders in regard to the matter, he had come to the conclusion that it would be better for him to follow the Englishman than to keep up the watch on the house.

Trevanion got off the car at Twenty-third street and went through to Broadway, entering the saloon of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

The boy followed the Englishman as faithfully as though he had been his shadow, and when Trevanion went into the saloon, Petey produced his newspapers and marched in after him.

Captain Murphy was in the saloon, waiting for the Englishman, and the pair immediately withdrew into a quiet corner where they entered into an earnest conversation.

There was no chance for the boy to get near enough to overhear any of their words, and he understood perfectly well that any attempt on his part to play the eavesdropper would surely result in his being discovered, therefore he only lingered in the saloon long enough to get a good look at the captain so as to be able to give a good description of him to the detective and then he departed, his idea being to go straight to Joe Phenix with his report.

Leaving Petey to go on his way we will turn our attention to the two schemers.

Trevanion related to the Irishman the particulars of his interview with the minister.

Murphy listened with the utmost attention and when Trevanion came to an end he rubbed his hands gleefully together and exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, you worked the thing in the most beautiful manner!"

"Do you think so?"

"Indeed I do!"

"Well, I think myself that I managed the matter pretty tidily."

"Oh, yes, and now the question rises, what will the reverend gentleman do?"

Trevanion shook his head.
 "That is a conundrum, eh?"
 "Indeed it is!"
 "I am not sure though but what you gave him a little too much time to think the matter over."

"It was my game to show him that I was not at all in a hurry."

"Ab, yes."
 "As I was perfectly sure of my ground I could afford to give him plenty of time to think the matter over, but as to what decision he will come it is a matter of speculation, of course."

"Oh, yes, I know that, and it is a mighty important riddle for us to solve, if we can."

"Well, my idea is that he will not do much of anything but meditate over the matter—worry a little, possibly, and when I call upon him he will be ready to come to some agreement with me."

"You do not think there is any danger of his calling upon a lawyer for advice?" the captain asked, shrewdly.

"No; considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, I do not think there is any likelihood of his adopting such a course," Trevanion replied.

"I have devoted a great deal of thought to this matter, and have tried to place myself in the position that this gentleman now occupies, so as to look at the matter from his stand-point," the Englishman continued.

"Yes, I comprehend; tried to transform yourself into the minister, so as to decide what course of action he will adopt."

"Exactly! Now, then, this is the result at which I arrived," Trevanion remarked:

"In the peculiar position which the man occupies, if he desired advice he would undoubtedly seek counsel from either a lawyer or a detective," the Englishman continued.

"That is correct; only a lawyer or a detective could be of any use, and if a lawyer was employed he would have to secure the aid of a detective."

"You have hit upon the truth," Trevanion asserted.

"The legal gentleman could give advice all right, but when it came to taking action a detective would be needed."

"But here comes the trouble which will confront the minister the moment he thinks of seeking advice: he can not ask anybody's counsel without going into the details of the affair. He must tell the story before advice can be given, and I think it will be safe to wager large odds that he will shrink from the task."

"Oh, yes, to a man situated as he is, the ordeal would be a hard one."

"There is still another course which he might adopt," the Englishman remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"He might call upon a lawyer or a detective for advice, and keep back the important facts of the case, saying merely that a certain man had called upon him in relation to a business transaction, and he wished to find out all he could about the party."

"Ab, yes, the game might be worked in that way," the captain admitted.

"But my gentleman would only have his labor for his pains," Trevanion declared. "For I defy the keenest detective in the world to discover anything to my discredit, apart from what I have already confessed."

"I told the reverend gentleman, in the frankest possible manner, that I was the black sheep of my family, and had the disagreeable habit of getting over head and ears in debt, so if the detective reports that I make my living chiefly by means of cards and billiards the information will not be any news."

With bent brows the captain pondered over the matter for a few moments, and then he said:

"I do not see a single weak point in the game. The man will not dare to make the story known to any one, and the odds are big that when you call on him in a week's time he will be glad to come to some arrangement."

"That is my belief."

"And we will collar a big stake! Come and have a drink to the success of our scheme!"

So, flushed with anticipated success, we will leave the pair of plotters.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CREOLE.

We will now return to Petey who, after he left the hotel, hurried to the apartment of the detective as fast as his legs could carry him.

Joe Phenix was at home, and a stylish-looking young gentleman bore him company.

A boyish-appearing fellow of two-and-twenty, or thereabouts, with jet-black hair, which was twisted into little crispy ringlets, and with his dark, olive-tinged features he looked like a foreigner.

He was well-built and muscular, notwithstanding his boyish face, and the firm-set, resolute chin, together with the keen, clear eyes, seemed to indicate that in the hour of danger the youth would not be found wanting in courage.

"Excuse me for a moment," Joe Phenix said to the young man, after he admitted the boy, and then led the way into the inner apartment.

There Petey told his story, and was highly commended by the great detective for his shrewdness.

"The intelligence which you have brought is important," Joe Phenix remarked. "And I have no doubt I can make good use of it."

"I thought there was something in it, and so I did me best so dat der man wid de 'side-boards' wouldn't tumble to me little game," the boy declared.

"You have done your work well, and here is a five-dollar note for you," the detective said, giving the bill to the boy, who received it thankfully enough.

"You need not do anything more to-night, to-morrow though you can keep your eyes on this house, and if the Englishman departs with any stranger, shadow them to the best of your ability."

Then he dismissed the boy, and resumed his seat in the outer apartment.

"That is a smart little fellow," the detective observed. "And he has brought some important information."

Then he explained the matter to the young man, who answered to the name of Louis Gontier, a creole from Louisiana.

"Yes, it really seems to be important," the other observed, thoughtfully. "For, unless there was some game on foot, such a man as this English rascal would never trouble himself to call upon a clergyman."

"And this is the second visit that the reverend gentleman has had from these parties," the detective remarked, and then he related how the boy had played the spy upon the Dangerous Blacksmith.

"First the woman called, and then the man," the young creole observed, in a reflective way.

"Yes, and it would appear as if the woman's visit was to pave the way for Trevanion."

"It certainly does."

"Of course, I have immediately jumped to the conclusion that this minister is connected in some mysterious way with the Tarrytown tragedy," the detective declared.

"The same thought has also come to me, although it is the same as blindly groping in the dark."

"What sort of a man is this clergyman?" the creole continued.

"One of the leading ministers of the city—or of the whole United States, for that matter, for he has made a national reputation."

"A very wealthy man, I believe," the detective added. "I have read sketches of his life, and it was so stated, if I remember rightly. He receives, probably, one of the largest salaries paid to a pastor in the country."

"Personally he seemed to be a superior man, and as an orator he stands in the first rank. I can testify to that of my own knowledge, for I have heard him lecture; he possesses that rare magnetism which compels the attention of even an indifferent listener. In fact, if I were asked to pick out one of the most notable ministers in the country, I could not select a better representative than this gentleman."

"Such a man would be rare game for a gang of scoundrels to get into their clutches," the creole remarked.

"That is true enough," Joe Phenix admitted. "It does not seem possible that even the keenest rascals that ever existed could possibly get such a man as this minister into their power, but there is an old saying that every man has a skeleton in his closet, and this eminent divine may not be any exception to the rule."

"Most certainly he would be a rich prey, and the gang could afford to spend a deal of time and trouble to secure a hold on such a man."

"Yes, and from the developments in the case it would seem as if the fellows were up to some game of the kind."

"But I am perplexed about the matter," Joe Phenix continued.

"There is a wide distance between this eminent clergyman and the unfortunate young actress who perished in the dark waters."

"Yes, it is true, and it really does not seem possible there can be any connection between the two. Still, stranger things than that have happened."

"I have been reflecting in regard to the girl's death," the creole added in an abrupt way. "And I cannot rest satisfied with the idea that she committed suicide."

"I have the thought in my mind—and I cannot get rid of it—that there has been foul play."

"It is not improbable, and the Dangerous Blacksmith would be just the man to do a piece of work of that kind," the detective affirmed.

"Suppose you call on this minister, explain that you are a detective, and see if you can discover anything?" Joe Phenix suggested.

"Very well, I will try the experiment. It cannot result in harm."

And so it was settled that the creole should interview the minister.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

It was on the night succeeding the one on which the events detailed in our preceding chapters took place that the creole visited the abode of the clergyman.

As the minister was one who believed that a man of his profession should be accessible to all callers, the young man had no difficulty in gaining admission to the house, for when he informed the servant that he desired to see the minister upon important business, he was immediately conducted to the small reception-room, and asked to wait while the reverend gentleman was summoned.

In a few moments Mr. Lecount made his appearance, and the creole, who was a keen observer, perceived at once that the minister was indeed no ordinary man.

The visitor came at once to business.

He rose and greeted the minister with a polite bow.

"Mr. Lecount?" he said, in a questioning tone.

"The same, sir, at your service," the reverend gentleman replied, fixing his large, dark eyes inquiringly on the face of the young man.

"I am a stranger to you and so I will introduce myself and explain why I have taken the liberty of calling upon you," the visitor said.

The minister bowed.

"I am called Louis Gontier, and I am in the private detective line."

A look of surprise appeared on Mr. Lecount's face.

"A private detective?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And you have business with me?"

"It is my impression that I have."

"I am somewhat surprised by the statement, but pray be seated."

The creole bowed his acknowledgments and sat down; the minister also took a chair, a perplexed look upon his face.

Mr. Lecount had closed the door upon entering the room, so there was no danger of the conversation being overheard.

"My dear sir, although your name is not familiar to me, yet your face is strangely so, and I feel sure that this is not the first time we have met—yet, strange to say, for I pride myself upon the goodness of my memory—I cannot recall the circumstances of our meeting," Mr. Lecount declared, abruptly.

He had been studying the face of the creole carefully and this was the conclusion at which he had arrived.

It was now the visitor's turn to be surprised. After closely scrutinizing Mr. Lecount he shook his head.

"I think you are laboring under a mistake, sir," he remarked.

"I have an excellent memory both for names and faces and I am certain that this is the first time I have ever had the pleasure of meeting you."

"It is most remarkable!" the minister declared, evincing a deep agitation. "The lines of your face—the tones of your voice—your peculiar carriage, are all as familiar to me as though I had been in the habit of meeting you daily and yet I cannot place you, as the saying is."

"I think, sir, that you are deceived by a strong resemblance that I must bear to some one whom you have met, for I am certain that this is the first time we have ever encountered each other," the visitor replied, decidedly.

"I cannot understand it at all! It is a most mysterious affair!" the minister remarked.

"It does not seem to me, you know, as if you were a person whom I lately met," he explained.

"On the contrary, the period of our acquaintance lies years ago, and yet that cannot be—it is impossible, for you are too young. If I am any judge of ages you are not over two-and-twenty."

"That is my age exactly."

"We have not met during the last ten or fifteen years. Of that I am positive."

"Fifteen years ago I was a child."

"Yes; it is evident that I have been deceived by a great resemblance which you bear to some one whom I knew in the long ago," the minister remarked in deep and earnest tones which plainly showed how interested he was in the matter. "And it is so strange too that I cannot remember the particulars," Mr. Lecount continued.

"I think that it is the first time in my life that my memory ever played me false in regard to anything of the kind," he added.

The visitor was much surprised that the reverend gentleman should attach so much importance to the matter, and expressed himself to that effect.

"It is strange, and I cannot explain why it is that the desire to recall where I encountered you should be so strong."

"It is one of those incomprehensible things which occur every now and then."

"But I am detaining you, wasting time in idle surmise, while you, no doubt, are anxious to explain your business."

"Well, Mr. Lecount, I have come to see you on a very peculiar errand," the young man remarked, slowly.

"As I said, I am a private detective, and I think that if I can succeed in gaining your confidence I will be able to do you a service."

The minister fixed his deep, dark eyes earnestly upon the face of the other, and it was plain that he was much impressed by the speech.

"You are a stranger to me, and in this un-

certain world, where there is so much deception and guile, it is not often wise for a man to put faith in one whom he does not know."

"That is true, and I am aware that it is rather an odd act on my part to come here with the expectation that I can gain your confidence by simply stating that I am a detective, and, if you will trust me, think I can be of assistance to you."

"I can give you ample proof though that I am what I represent myself to be," the creole continued.

"In this matter I am acting with the well-known detective, whose name is probably familiar to you, Joe Phenix."

"Yes, I know the gentleman by reputation."

"I am one of his Specials," the young man explained.

"And now, to come right to the heart of the business, I will say that it is Mr. Phenix's belief that a gang of adroit and dangerous schemers are endeavoring to make you their victim."

"Is it possible?" Mr. Lecount exclaimed with a wondering glance.

"Yes, that is the idea that Mr. Phenix have formed from certain circumstances which has come to his knowledge."

"The principal schemer is an Englishman, who calls himself Lorraine Trevanion, and with him are associated two others, one, a genteel adventurer who passes under the name of Captain Gordon Murphy, and a low sort of a scoundrel, a regular New York tough, who is known among his pals as the Dangerous Blacksmith."

The minister was amazed at this disclosure, coming as it did so entirely unexpected.

"Really, I am astounded!" he declared.

"And Mr. Phenix has made a shrewd guess that in some way these plotters seek to connect you with this young girl who was found drowned at Tarrytown, Constance Blakeley, who was claimed by this Trevanion to have been his wife."

"Upon my word, sir, I marvel at the wonderful knowledge of your chief!" the minister declared.

"Now, in regard to this Tarrytown mystery, although the verdict of the coroner's jury was that the girl came to her death by natural means—their thought evidently being that she either fell into the water accidentally or else threw herself in with the idea of committing suicide, and they gave her the benefit of the doubt in their verdict, but my principal is of the opinion that there was some foul play in connection with the girl's death."

"This is amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Lecount, much surprised by this intelligence.

"Yes, and he believes these three men, Trevanion, Captain Murphy and the Dangerous Blacksmith, had a hand in the matter."

"But, so far, he has not been able to discover any reason why the three should desire the girl's death."

"If the three stood a chance to gain anything by her departure from the world, then there would be a motive for the use of foul play."

"Your words, my dear sir, have let in a flood of light upon my brain!" the minister declared.

"The knowledge of your chief is so great that I assume he is aware that this Englishman, Trevanion, has called upon me?"

"Yes, and he also knows that the Dangerous Blacksmith has also visited you, but it was by proxy," the young man added.

"He did not come himself, but sent his wife, one of the most notorious confidence-women in the country, who is known among the crooks as Sheeney Sal."

"Astounding!" Mr. Lecount exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, a very dangerous woman."

"I should judge so, for she deceived me in the most complete manner," and then the gentleman related the particulars of the woman's visit.

"Aha! this is a bit of important information!" the creole affirmed.

"It is evident that the Dangerous Blacksmith has not been admitted to the confidence of the others, but he fancied there was some big scheme on foot and so did his best to get in so as to claim a share."

"Yes, the game was a cunning one, but it did not succeed."

"And now we come to Trevanion's visit. He came, and represented, I suppose, that he was the husband of the dead girl?"

"Yes, he did."

"And that is a falsehood!" the creole declared.

"The Englishman was not her husband, unless he committed bigamy, for he was already married to a woman named Mignon Lawrence, also an actress, and until he got a divorce from her he could not legally marry Constance Blakeley."

"Is this the truth?" Mr. Lecount demanded, very much astonished.

"It is. It is possible, of course, that he may have secured a bogus divorce in some one of the Western States, but the first wife was never notified and such a divorce would not stand in law."

"This man then is a barefaced scoundrel, for if he was not the husband of the unfor-

tunate girl who came to her death at Tarrytown there was no reason why he should call upon me."

"There is then some connection between you and the dead girl?"

"Yes, I will not attempt to disguise the truth from you; I did not admit there was to the woman, but at that time I was ignorant of the fact, and so, knowingly, did not give utterance to a falsehood."

"Until this Trevanion called upon me and told his story I had no knowledge of the matter."

The minister was plainly nervous and embarrassed, and the visitor was shrewd enough to suspect why he was so affected.

"Of course it is not possible for me to guess in regard to the nature of the communication which Trevanion made to you, but I have an idea it related to money; that is, the Englishman expected to get money from you on account of what he said."

"Yes, that is correct, and he desired a large sum too."

"Now we are beginning to get at the truth!" the creole exclaimed with a deal of satisfaction in his tone.

"And this admission on your part goes far to show what an able man my principal, Joe Phenix, is in his line."

"It was only by sheer accident that he had his attention attracted to this case, and when he examined the body of the unfortunate young woman in the undertaker's shop at Tarrytown, he believed he was looking upon the remains of an old acquaintance, for this Constance Blakeley bore a great likeness to a girl who had acted as the detective's assistant in a certain matter."

"This was Mignon Lawrence, the young actress, whom Trevanion married and deserted."

"And on account of having known the girl Mr. Phenix became interested in the case, thinking there had been foul play, but he did not reveal to any one that he knew the girl."

"Then Trevanion made his appearance; he had come apparently to attend to some business which required his presence in Tarrytown, but Mr. Phenix suspected at once that he had come especially to identify the girl, but arranged the matter so it would appear as if he had no knowledge of the body being there."

"I understand; he schemed in that way so that no suspicion might arise that he had a hand in her death."

"Yes, that was the game, and as a stranger in the town he, naturally, went with others to take a look at the body, but to Mr. Phenix's surprise he identified the remains as being those of Constance Blakeley, whom he claimed to be his wife."

"Well, was that the truth, or was it the body of the girl of whom you spoke, Miss Lawrence?"

"No, Miss Lawrence is alive, and is now in the city, eager too for vengeance upon this English rascal."

"Mr. Phenix was deceived by the strong likeness which Constance Blakeley bore to Miss Lawrence."

"When the detective discovered that Trevanion was interested in the matter he at once jumped to the conclusion that there had indeed been foul play, and so he caused a watch to be put upon the Englishman, hoping to be able to trap him, and so he came to the knowledge that Trevanion was associated with this adventurer, Captain Murphy, and the ruffian known as the Dangerous Blacksmith."

"And now, then, Mr. Lecount, if Constance Blakeley was alive could this Trevanion hope to get any money from you?"

"No, he could not," the minister replied, immediately. "For if she was living the money would go to her."

"Of course, after it was in her possession she could give it to him if she liked."

"I will explain the matter to you, trusting to your discretion to keep it a secret!" the minister exclaimed with a sudden burst of confidence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BOLD MOVE.

"You need not fear to trust me, Mr. Lecount," the young man declared.

"I give you my word that I will not reveal a single syllable of the disclosure without your permission. I will hold the confidence as sacred as a priest would one made under the seal of the confessional," he continued, and if ever truth was apparent in the face and voice of a human, it was now visible as the creole spoke.

"I am not afraid to give you the particulars, for I have perfect faith that you will not betray my confidence."

"And it seems, too, as if it would be a relief to me to confide the matter to you," the minister continued, with a sad look upon his strongly marked features.

"For many years I have carried the secret securely locked in my own breast, and a grievous burden it has been, too."

"Yes, as Shakespeare says, 'give sorrow vent the grief that will not speak whispers to the o'erfraught heart and bids it break,'" the young man quoted.

"And how true that is, too!" Mr. Lecount exclaimed.

"How well the Great Master knew human nature and the secret springs which move the mortal puppets."

"It is natural for the afflicted one to speak of the sorrows which press with cankering care upon the heart."

"To speak is to gain relief; it is as if the burden was shared by another."

"Yes, it is natural for man or woman to seek sympathy in the hour of affliction," the visitor remarked.

"A man like myself is, by reason of his position, held somewhat apart from the world," Mr. Lecount remarked.

"I have no intimate friends to whom I may confide my sorrows. I am solitary and alone, a man who receives confidences, but is not supposed to have any to bestow: but I will say to you, frankly, that, although you are a stranger to me, there is something about you which has won my confidence."

"I cannot very well explain how it is, for it is one of those things for which a reason cannot be given. All I can say is that I am impelled to confide in you, but why I know not."

"I assure you, sir, that I feel honored by your confidence!" the young man declared, in earnest tones. "And I am sure you will not find me unworthy of it."

"Oh, I feel certain of that!" the minister exclaimed.

"I do not understand how it is that I find myself so strangely attracted to you, for I am not a man quick to receive favorable impressions, being reserved by nature, but it is a fact that I am strongly impressed in your favor, and so I am going to speak as frankly to you as though you were a friend whom I had known for years—whom I had weighed in the balance and not found wanting."

"Well, I feel sure that as far as I am concerned I will not give you cause to regret having placed trust in me!" the creole declared.

"Oh, I am satisfied I will not," the minister replied.

And after this declaration he proceeded to tell the story with which the reader is already familiar.

The young man listened with the utmost attention.

And then after Mr. Lecount had, with the utmost frankness, told the tale of his early life, he related the particulars of his interview with Trevanion.

"You were wise to confide in me," the creole declared, when the minister came to the end of the recital. "For, as it happens, I can be of great service to you."

"I am glad that, for, after what you have told me in regard to this Englishman, I realize that I am in the power of an unprincipled scoundrel."

"Oh, yes, there is no doubt about that. The Englishman is a rascal of the first water!" the visitor asserted.

"The game that he is trying to play upon you is blackmail pure and simple—nothing else in the world."

"You could hardly be blamed for acting as you did in this affair; not one man out of a million would have acted differently!"

"I do not feel that I am altogether blameless in the matter," the minister remarked with a grave shake of the head.

"It was really my duty, after I obtained wealth, to have sought for the unfortunate woman and tried my best to reform her."

"But I did not make an effort in that direction. I was weak, and shrunk from meeting with the unfortunate creature, and so even if I had to submit to be blackmailed by this Englishman it would only be a just punishment."

"It was a strange chance which made him acquainted with the facts in this case," the young man observed in a reflective way.

"Yes, it was odd, but he was just the man to seize upon the opportunity to turn the matter to his own advantage. As the husband of my daughter he, of course, had a sort of a claim upon me."

"You have no doubt that his story was correct?" the creole questioned.

"It certainly seemed to be so."

"Well, it is not!" the visitor exclaimed in a very decided way. "As it happens I am acquainted with some of the facts in the case, and so am in a position to judge."

The minister was amazed at this statement.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is a fact and you can now see, I suppose, what a lucky thing it was for you that you yielded to the instinct which impelled you to tell your story to me, an entire stranger."

"Of course, I hadn't any idea of what I was about to hear, and had no notion that you were going to speak of a familiar matter, but with some of the details I am well acquainted."

"It is vastly strange!"

"Yes, it is one of those odd things which are always happening."

"The Englishman has so cunningly mingled truth and falsehood together that it would be an extremely hard matter for any one not familiar with all the particulars to separate the two."

"As it happens I can throw a little light on the subject."

"It will be very fortunate indeed if you can," Mr. Leconte observed.

"When he told the story of your early life he kept strictly to the truth, for he knew that if he diverged you would be able to detect it immediately."

"Yes, he did not make any mistakes in the recital."

"Then when he went on to tell about the brother and sister; the story of their crime and flight was undoubtedly correct."

"Very true! I am sure it was, for the story was published in the newspapers far and wide at the time."

"His recital of how the pair sought refuge here in New York, was probably true; his description of the birth of the child was correct, and now we come to the important point:

"How did he propose to prove that this girl, Constance, was the child which was abandoned by its mother here in New York?"

"He spoke of a peculiar malformation of the little toe on the right foot."

"Yes, the dead woman had that mark."

"That to me was strong proof that she was my child, for I have a similar malformation on my right foot, but he could not have possibly known that fact."

"That is true, still that might be only a coincidence, you know. There are undoubtedly quite a number of people who were born with a mark of that kind, but as it is hidden from sight the circumstance is not generally known."

"Yes, I presume that statement is correct."

"For instance, I am marked in that way, but that does not go to prove I am your son," the visitor remarked with a smile.

"Oh, no."

"Did he mention any other proof which he could present?"

"Yes, he said the midwife who gave the child to Mrs. Blakeley was still alive—was in New York, and would bear witness to the fact."

"That would be good proof, of course," the young man remarked in a reflective way.

"If he could produce the woman, and she was willing to swear that she gave Margaret Williams's child—the child with the double little toe on the right foot—to Mrs. Blakeley, it would be strong evidence to show that the dead woman was that child."

"Oh, yes, and this is what he said he could do."

"He cannot!" the visitor exclaimed in a very decided way. "The man is telling you a falsehood. I do not doubt that he is prepared to bring forward a woman who will make such a statement, but the woman will be an impostor, and if she swears to any such statement she will be taking a false oath."

"Under the circumstances I am not qualified to judge," the minister remarked.

"All I can say is that he made such a statement."

"I not doubt that if you were incredulous he would be quite willing to produce the woman so you could hear her evidence," the young man remarked.

"There is a vast deal of difference between a witness giving evidence to you here in your own private apartment, and the same party getting up in a court of justice before a judge, used to sifting truth from falsehood, and with a horde of lawyers ready to pounce upon the slightest discrepancy."

"Oh, yes, that goes without saying; the ordeal is vastly different."

"In the first situation everything is to be kept as quiet as possible. In the second all are anxious to drag the facts to the light."

"I am afraid that in a case of this kind I would make a very poor judge indeed," the minister remarked. "It would not be a difficult matter for unscrupulous people to deceive me."

"Now let me explain to you how it is that I am so certain that this man's story is a falsehood."

"As it happens, I was well acquainted with Constance Blakeley, and know all about her life."

"She was an English girl, born in the town of Bristol, England. Both her father and mother were stage people, and were engaged at the Bristol Theater at the time of her birth."

"As a baby, about six months old, she appeared on the stage, playing the part of the child in the old play of Plazzo, and the actor who represented the leading part, Rolla, the Peruvian hero, is at present in this city."

"He was the manager of the company, and Mr. and Mrs. Blakeley, with the child, traveled with him for three or four years after the birth of the infant."

"He most certainly would be a strong witness."

"Yes, for he was in daily contact with the child from the time it was born until it was three or four years old."

"This gentleman has now retired from the stage, and is keeping an English ale and chop-house here in New York, so he can be got at without difficulty."

"Another point: Constance Blakeley did not come to this country until three years ago, and she was a thorough English girl in every re-

spect, and no one who knew her could possibly make the mistake of thinking she was an American."

"This fellow, then, is playing a bold game of deception?" the minister remarked, much amazed.

"Yes, he is acting on the calculation that you will not dare to make an open investigation, for fear of some of the circumstances of the affair becoming public property."

"He knows how sensitive a man in your calling is of his reputation, and he is building on that."

"Yes, it is evidently so," the minister said, thoughtfully.

"You have let a flood of light in on my mind," he continued. "But tell me, do you think there is any truth in his story that this unfortunate wife of mine did have a daughter here in New York?"

"That is a subject which should be investigated before an answer is given," the young man remarked, in a rather evasive way.

"If you wish I will look into the matter, and endeavor to ascertain the truth."

"My dear sir, I shall be extremely grateful to you if you will undertake the matter!" Mr. Leconte exclaimed.

"Spare no expenses; call upon me for any money that you may need; I will not grudge it, if the expenditure will only give my child to my arms!"

"Very well, sir, I will do all I can for you," the creole remarked, with a peculiar look in his clear, keen eyes.

"But now to return to this other affair. From what I have ascertained, there does not seem to be any doubt that this unfortunate girl, Constance, was murdered by this gang of scoundrels, so that money might be extorted from you on the plea that she was your daughter, and this Trevanion was her husband."

"Yes, it really seems to be so, and yet the thought is horrible!" Mr. Leconte declared.

"It does not seem to be possible that there can be such wretches in the world."

"The miserable men evidently have no fears of a hereafter."

"No, the other world does not trouble them," the young man remarked.

"You see, in order to carry out their plan, they had to get rid of the girl," the visitor remarked.

"I knew her well, and therefore understand that the conspirators could not possibly have got away with her, for she was hot-tempered, self-willed, and yet one of the greatest cowards that ever existed."

"The plotters could never have relied upon her to aid them by personating your daughter, for she would surely have blundered."

"Yes, I understand. It was necessary for them to commit one crime so as to pave the way for another."

"And now, then, let us see how we must arrange to defeat these scoundrels," the creole said, musingly.

"In the first place, it is desirable to contrive so as to keep your history from becoming public."

"My dear sir, do not trouble yourself in regard to that matter, I beg!" the minister hastened to exclaim.

"Proceed to capture these wretches as soon as you can, and take no heed whether I am exposed or not."

"At first, I will admit, the thought was a dreadful one to me, but I have been thinking over the matter, and I have come to the conclusion that it is my duty as an honest man to take no steps to cover up the shameful past."

"My conscience tells me that I did not act as I ought to have acted."

"Many a night have I lain awake and reflected upon my conduct. I have tried to excuse myself by saying that I merely acted as the great majority of men in this life would have acted under the circumstances, but that does not satisfy my conscience. I did not do right, and if my sad story becomes known to the world, so that the unfortunate men who are glad to get any opportunity to revile the professors of religion can point the finger of shame at one and cry: 'See what a shameful coward this teacher of morality was when the hour of trial came!' I deserve their scorn."

"I made no effort to discover anything of my unfortunate wife when I became prosperous, but kept on in my career, indifferent whether she was alive or dead."

"But now, although I presume it is too late, I will make the effort."

"Will you undertake the task? It is right in your line, you know, and I will defray the expense."

"Certainly, I will be glad to do so," the young man replied.

"If I remember rightly, you stated in your account of your interview with this Trevanion that he hinted there was a probability your wife was still alive."

"Yes, that is correct."

"The creole pondered over the matter for a moment and then he said:

"I do not believe he knows anything about the matter. The statement was made to intimi-

date you; his idea being that if you thought there was any danger of this wretched woman being brought forward you would gladly agree to his terms."

"Yes, I presume so. At the time I looked upon the statement as being intended for a threat."

"The first thing is to gain time, so as to afford an opportunity for myself and my associates to work on the case."

"He was to come in a week for his answer," the minister suggested.

"Yes, I remember your statement to that effect."

"Well, a week will give us some time, but hardly enough to get to the heart of such a complicated case as this undoubtedly is," the other remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"We must manage to gain more time in some way."

"How can the matter be arranged?"

"When this man comes tell him that you want to be satisfied that his story is correct, and you would like to have him produce the woman who delivered the child to Mrs. Blakeley; then, if you are satisfied with her evidence, you will agree to his terms."

"Well, I do not see why he should object to that proposition for it is only accepting his own offer."

"He undoubtedly will agree, and you then can say that as your time is occupied it will not be convenient for you to receive her for three days, which will give us three days more in which to work."

"I will do as you say, and, in the meanwhile, do not neglect to search high and low for the mother and the child."

"Do not fear in regard to that, for I will do my best, and also call Mr. Phenix's attention to the matter, and he will set all the secret detective machinery at work, so if the party is in the city she will be found if it lies within the power of man to accomplish the feat."

"My dear sir, I shall be very grateful to you indeed, if you are successful!" the minister declared, earnestly, and with deep feeling in his voice.

"I have borne this suspense for years, but now the load has grown too heavy for me and I am determined to learn just how I am situated."

"It is a wise resolve it seems to me, and I will do the best I can for you."

"By the way," the creole remarked, as he rose to depart, "it may be necessary for me to call upon you, and as it is possible that these scoundrels may place a watch upon the house for the purpose of ascertaining if you have employed detectives, I will come disguised."

"Very well, it is a wise precaution, it seems to me," the minister remarked. He had also risen.

"One of my favorite tricks is to array myself in female garments, so if you receive a message that a lady, Miss Blank, wishes an interview, you will understand that it is your spy."

"I will remember."

"I shall try to do all I can to keep this matter quiet," the young man declared.

"There is not a doubt in my mind that Constance Blakeley came to her death by foul means. I am satisfied that she was murdered by this gang of which the Englishman, Trevanion, appears to be the head and front, or, at all events, if he is not the leader of the gang he is the figure-head, and I intend to bring the murderers to the bar of justice; but it is possible that the story of your early life may have to be told, no matter how hard I may try to keep the matter in the background."

"My dear sir, do not give a single thought to my affairs as far as keeping them secret is concerned, I beg of you!" the minister exclaimed.

"Go on in the execution of this most laudable purpose, without any regard for me."

"I am not inclined by nature to be a harsh man, but for such wretches as these I cannot feel any sympathy, and I think it is but right they should be punished to the full extent of the law which they have so wantonly broken."

"I will do my best to trap the rascals," was the creole's parting speech.

The young man walked slowly down the avenue.

A car came along, but the creole did not take it.

"No, no," he muttered, "I am so full of excitement—so annoyed by this unexpected development, that I must attempt to walk it off, for my head is in such a whirl that it seems to me as if there was danger I would lose the use of my senses."

By this time the speaker had reached the cross street, into which he turned and proceeded toward Broadway.

"It is evident that Trevanion is playing a deep and dangerous game—for a large stake, too, not less than ten thousand dollars and a couple of thousand per year for life."

"Well, well! the fellow is certainly not modest in his demands!" the young man exclaimed, with a bitter laugh.

"And my gentleman would undoubtedly have

succeeded in getting the money if Phenix had not in such a truly wonderful manner become interested in the game.

"Who will dare to say there isn't anything in dreams after this strong proof?"

"If it were not for his dreams, Phenix would never have become interested in this matter, and those scoundrels would have succeeded in their carefully planned designs.

"And what an illustration of the mysterious working of a just Providence the fate of this unfortunate girl, Constance, is; she went off with this scamp of an Englishman, knowing that he was abandoning his wife, and that he could not marry her without wronging another woman.

"She understood all the facts in the case, and so could not plead ignorance, but she willfully did wrong, and as a result, she was untimely cut off in the very flower of her youth.

"There is some one in the background—some bold and desperate rascal, for Trevanion is not the man to either plan or execute a crime of this kind.

"It is this Captain Murphy, probably; he is the man who got up the scheme.

"In some way he arrived at the knowledge of how the minister was situated, and the idea came to him that if the English girl was put out of the way, so she could not talk, he could substitute her for the true daughter, and if it had not been for my thorough acquaintance with the affair the attempt might have succeeded, for it would have bothered even an acute detective like Joe Phenix to separate the falsehood from the truth, the rascals having blended them together so skillfully.

"But, as it is, with the aid of the detective and his Specials, I do not think there is any doubt but what the plans of these schemers can be defeated, and the rascals themselves trapped.

"I owe Master Trevanion a grudge for his treatment of me, and now it seems likely I will have a splendid opportunity to pay the debt, and I will not fail to do so!"

A dark look was on the face of the creole as the remark was made. He went on his way, brooding moodily over the past, until Broadway was reached, then he turned into that thoroughfare and proceeded down-town.

Just below Fortieth street the creole's attention was attracted to two men entering the doorway of a saloon.

One of the pair was the Englishman, Trevanion, and the other answered to the description which had been given of the Irishman, Captain Gordon Murphy.

The heart of the spy beat more quickly, and a fierce smile appeared on his dark features.

"There are my birds now!" he muttered, between his clinched teeth.

"If I can only succeed in trapping them, what a surprise it will be for the rascals, and what a splendid triumph for me," he continued.

As he came to the end of the sentence the pair entered the saloon, and then, a sudden inspiration coming to him, the creole followed them.

The two were standing at the end of the bar, as the spy entered, facing the door.

A smile illuminated the features of the creole, and he nodded to the Englishman in a familiar way.

"Why, Trevanion, old fellow, how are you?" he exclaimed, advancing with outstretched hand.

"You remember me, don't you, Louis Gontier, of Chicago? I was introduced to you one night in the Grand Opera House Saloon."

"Ah, yes, your face is familiar to me," Trevanion replied, shaking the other's hand warmly.

CHAPTER XXX.

A CUNNING SCHEME.

FROM the nature of Trevanion's profession—a hawk, always on the watch for pigeons to pluck—it was his custom to greet with the utmost friendliness all well-dressed strangers with whom he came in contact.

Then too, the face of the young man was familiar to him, although he had no remembrance of ever having encountered him before.

Still this was not strange, for if he had been merely introduced to the young man in a saloon, and the acquaintanceship had progressed no further than taking a drink in company, it was not odd he should not be able to place the gentleman.

He had made the acquaintance of a hundred men in that way, and then, as he had never encountered them afterward, all remembrance had vanished from his mind.

But, as we stated, the face of the stranger was certainly familiar, so he had no doubt that he had met him in Chicago as the creole said.

"Deuced glad to have met you, old boy!" the young man exclaimed, "I began to feel like a fish out of water! You see I arrived in New York this morning, and, so far, haven't seen a face that was familiar to me until I encountered you.

"It is astonishing how lonesome a man can get in a big city, amid a crowd of strangers, each fellow hurrying along for dear life."

"Is this your first visit to New York?" Trevanion asked.

"Yes, and a deuced big, overgrown place it is too!" the other replied.

"Out West, we think the Windy City is a little ahead of anything in creation, but, I tell you, it isn't a marker to New York!"

"You had better not make such an admission as that in Chicago, or they will not own you," the Englishman remarked with a laugh.

"Blessed if I care whether they do or not!" the young man replied. "I am independent of Chicago now! An uncle of mine in Louisiana has just died and left me a clean fifty thousand dollars.

"I am from Louisiana, you know, the Teche country, where the sugar plantations are, but my father was too fond of fast horses and gambling, so when he died the mortgages eat up the plantation, and as I had relatives in business in Chicago I went up there to try commercial life awhile, but I never was cut out for a merchant, and I tell you, it was a godsend to me when uncle Louis kicked the bucket and left me his ready cash."

"I am glad to hear of your good luck!" Trevanion declared, affecting to take a deep interest in the matter.

Already both he and his companion had come to the conclusion that the young man was one whose acquaintance would be worth cultivating, for if he was worth any fifty thousand dollars, the chances were good they would be able to get hold of a good bit of the money if they played their cards correctly.

"Yes, I am always delighted when I hear that a friend of mine has come in for a windfall," the Englishman continued.

"There are lots of old hunks in this world who have plenty of cash, which they keep locked up in strong boxes, where it does not do anybody any good, whereas, if their heirs, the fine, dashing young bloods, had the money, it would be put in circulation, so as to make things hum, and there is a bit of political economy for you from the standpoint of a man of the world."

"There is a deuced lot of sound sense in what you say!" the young man declared.

"My uncle was a regular old miser, and never spent a cent that he could help, but I am getting rid of the money though," he continued.

"Not that I intend to make a fool of myself and throw away the cash," he added.

"Oh, no, certainly not," Trevanion chimed in, manifesting that delightful spirit of wanting to agree with the other's sentiments, which the rich young man usually finds in his companions who are not so well off in this world's goods as himself.

"But as I have always been driven with a check-rein, so to speak, now that I have got my head loose, I am going to have a run for my money."

"That is the talk!" the captain exclaimed.

"That is the proper kind of spirit to show."

"Oh, by the way! I have neglected to introduce you to my friend here," the Englishman remarked.

"I shall be proud to make the acquaintance of any friend of yours, Trevanion," the creole replied, in his frank and easy way.

Then the pair were introduced, the captain exerting himself to the utmost to make a favorable impression upon the other.

"As I was saying, after I came in for this money I made up my mind to have a jolly good time."

"That shows you had a sensible head on your shoulders!" the captain affirmed.

"Oh, any one who knows our friend here understands that he is up to snuff!" Trevanion declared, patting the young man on the shoulder.

"I set apart just one-tenth of my fortune, five thousand dollars, and made up my mind to go in for a good time."

"An excellent idea!" the captain cried, and he, too, patted the creole on the back with an air which seemed to say that he considered him to be the dearest friend he had in the world.

"Yes, and that was just the right way to go to work," Trevanion assented.

"No rushing in blindly without knowing what you're doing!"

"Yes, five thousand dollars I intend to spend for enjoyment, and then with the rest I shall settle down to solid business."

"I started in to work this scheme in Chicago," the young man continued. "But after I had got rid of five hundred 'cases' I came to the conclusion that the windy city was altogether too slow a place, and so I took a run on to New York."

"But talking is dry work, gentlemen; let us have a little wine to moisten our throats."

"We will be happy to join you in a social glass and drink success to you in your endeavors to get a little enjoyment out of your windfall," Trevanion remarked.

Then the young man ordered a bottle of champagne, and tossed a five-dollar bill upon the counter with the air of a millionaire.

"Where are you staying?" the captain asked as the three sipped the wine.

"I haven't settled upon a place yet, but I suppose I can't do any better than to go to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, as that has the reputation of being a tony place," the creole replied.

"My idea was to cruise around town for

awhile so as to see what New York was like. I only brought a gripsack with me and I left that in the baggage-room of the railroad."

"You will find as comfortable quarters at the Fifth Avenue as anywhere in town," Trevanion remarked.

By this time the wine was disposed of and the three left the saloon.

"We will walk down with you as far as the hotel," the captain said; "I presume you know it is on Broadway?"

"Oh, yes, although I am a stranger in New York, I have read so much about the city that I can find my way around without any difficulty."

"I say, Trevanion, suppose we have a game of billiards," the captain suggested. "You owe me my revenge for the drubbing you gave me the other night."

"Oh, yes, I shall be glad to accommodate you but I don't exactly feel like it to-night; I shall not regret to give you your revenge though all the same," the Englishman replied.

"Perhaps you play?" the captain suggested to the young man in his most engaging manner.

"No, billiards is some thing that I do not know any thing about, but I don't mind a little poker once in a while."

"Well, we can have a little go at poker. What do you say, Trevanion?" Murphy asked.

"I am agreeable; anything to help pass the time away," the Englishman replied.

"Really, gentlemen, I am afraid you will have to excuse me to-night," the creole remarked.

"I haven't money enough to make the game interesting. You see I only had fifty when I started from Chicago, and I got rid of thirty of that on fare and incidentals on the road."

"To-morrow I will be in funds though, for I have drafts on one of the Wall street bankers, and I shall go down in the morning and cash up."

"Let me give you a pointer, my dear fellow!" the captain exclaimed with the air of a sage.

"I have had a good deal of experience with bankers, and I know what trouble a man has sometimes drawing funds which are in their hands."

"The rascals like to hold on to the money as long as they can, you know—and that is natural too, for it is a part of their business, and you must come in office hours, and submit to go through a lot of red-tape business, which, to a gentleman, is deucedly annoying."

"Now the way I always arrange the matter is to get my cash out of the hands of these deuced money sharps as soon as I can."

"If I were you I should draw all your money to-morrow—make a clean sweep of it, and then give the sum to the hotel clerk to take care of, then your cash is practically on top, as it were; you can get money whenever you want it, and it is absolutely safe until you use it."

"That is true!" Trevanion assented.

"The idea is a good one."

"I have been there, my dear fellow, and so I know all about it!" the captain asserted.

"Suppose now, for instance, that you wanted to get a hundred to use for any particular purpose to-night, you could not get it from your banker."

"Of course not!" the young man replied, "I would have to wait until ten o'clock in the morning."

"Exactly, and that is where the hotel business comes in so handy," the captain remarked.

"You are not bound down to a few hours, but can get your money whenever you like."

"Your advice is good, and I will adopt it," the young man declared. "I will go down-town in the morning as soon as the Wall street sharps are open for business, draw out my funds and deposit them with the hotel clerk."

"I say, Trevanion, we haven't anything in particular on hand in the morning, I think," the captain observed in a reflective way.

"No, nothing that I can call to mind at present," the Englishman answered, also assuming a thoughtful air, just as though his business engagements were so plentiful that he feared some of them might have escaped his mind.

"Suppose then that we accompany our young friend down-town so as to see that he is not devoured by any of these bulls and bears of Wall street that we hear so much about," the captain said in a jocose way.

"I am agreeable."

"Well, gentlemen, I will be glad of your company, for it is a strange quarter to me and I haven't got the lay of the land yet," the young man declared.

By this time the three had arrived at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and the captain insisted upon treating his companions to a bottle of wine, so into the saloon they went, had the wine, and then the pair of adventurers escorted Gontier to the hotel office and watched him while he registered his name on the hotel books and arranged for a room, then took their departure, promising to meet the creole at ten o'clock in the morning.

"What do you think of him?" Trevanion asked as he and his companion proceeded slowly down the street.

"Well, it is my opinion that he is no fool," the captain replied.

"Decidedly not! He struck me as being an extremely sharp fellow.

"Oh, yes, and he is going about this business of enjoying himself in a very methodical way.

"Of course, it is our game to get hold of this little four thousand odd dollars that he talked so coolly of throwing away," the captain continued.

"Do you think we can do it by means of a little sharp practice at cards?" Trevanion asked, and it was plain from his tone that he was extremely doubtful about the matter.

"Well, no, to tell the honest truth, I don't," the other answered.

"He is a Southerner, and as far as my experience goes the most of these Southerners are born gamblers, and the chances are, I think, that if we attempt to win his money by cheating him at cards he would not be long in smoking out the trick."

"That is my opinion also."

"Oh, no, he is a clear-headed and sensible fellow and we can not hope to make anything by going on the idea that he is a country bumpkin."

"It is a very odd thing that I can not remember under what circumstances I met him," Trevanion remarked, thoughtfully.

"There is something about his face, voice and manner so familiar to me as I listened to his conversation that it does not seem possible he can be only a casual acquaintance."

"He is rather a remarkable young fellow—something out of the common run, and he would be apt to make more impression upon a man like yourself than the average fellow whom you encounter in your daily walks."

"Yes, that may be the explanation," the Englishman said, slowly. "But, strange to say, I have a sort of a feeling as if there was something unpleasant connected with my meeting with him."

The captain looked surprised.

"Upon my life, old fellow! that is very odd!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I know it, and that is why I am so puzzled about the matter."

"If you had had any trouble with the man you certainly would have remembered it."

"Of course, but although, as I say, I am sure I have met him before, yet for the life of me I cannot recall any of the circumstances."

"Well, it seems to me that is ample proof there wasn't anything worth remembering," the captain argued.

"Yes, it would seem as if I could account for it in that way, but I don't understand why I should be at all troubled about the matter."

"Ah, your stomach is a little out of order, and when a man gets a little out of sorts in that way all kind of queer ideas are apt to come to him."

"I know how it is," the captain continued. "I have been affected in just that fashion myself."

"One thing I will say about this young fellow, though," he added. "And that is, I have a nimpression he would be a hard customer to handle if he once got the suspicion that anything was wrong."

"Yes, I fully agree with you in regard to that."

"And it is my opinion too that if we attempted to fleece this man at cards we should only have our labor for our pains."

"You are right there, I think. The speculation does not appear to be a promising one, and we might catch a Tartar."

"Agreed! but for all that it is not my intention to allow a fellow with four or five thousand dollars to slip through my fingers without making a desperate effort to collar some of the cash."

"There is more than one way to kill a cat, you know," the captain added, significantly.

"I supposed that when you made the suggestion to him to take his money from the Wall street men and give it to the care of the hotel clerk you had some scheme in your head."

"Exactly! your judgment, my dear friend, does you credit, but you have know me long enough to be aware I would not bother myself to give advice about such a matter without I had a notion I could make something out of it."

"What is the scheme?"

"Well, it is very simple indeed. I think it will work all right though, but we must have assistance. The Dangerous Blacksmith's wife will be just the woman to do the trick, I imagine."

"I haven't exactly got the idea of the game."

"We go down to Wall street with this Western lamb to-morrow. He draws his money from his banker and stows it away in one of his pockets, then we start for up-town."

"When we get to Broadway I suddenly remember that some little while ago an English friend of mine told me that if I was ever down in the neighborhood of Wall street and Broadway, I must call upon him, and I will say I think his office was at a certain number. We will go down early in the morning and select a building with a narrow entrance."

"As we go in, I will take the advance, and you will get the young fellow to come next, bringing up the rear yourself."

"In the passageway the woman will be in

waiting and as we come in she starts to go out.

"I can give her the 'office' as to where the money is by a signal which we will arrange beforehand."

"In passing, she will stumble and fall against me, I will endeavor to get out of the way, and then, in avoiding me she will run against our victim; you, coming on in the rear, must jostle him and in the confusion the woman will get the 'leather' and skip with it."

"Then we will go on; at the foot of the stairs I will change my mind and say: 'What is the use of climbing these stairs? life is too short! I will tell my friend that if he expects me to call upon him he must provide an elevator.'"

"Away then we go up-town, taking a car; the Broadway line is always crowded, and if the young fellow discovers the loss of his money before he reaches the hotel, the chances are great he will believe that it was stolen on board of the car."

"It is an excellent scheme, and I cannot see any reason why it will not work."

"Oh, I think it is safe to go though all right!" the captain declared.

"But we must get hold of the Dangerous Blacksmith so as to post his wife in regard to the scheme."

"He usually can be found in one of the Bowery dives. Suppose we go there?"

The captain agreed to this and the pair started.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN COUNCIL.

AFTER the two plotters left the hotel the young man came to the door and took his stand with the rest of the loungers.

From the hotel porch he was able to watch the pair until they got well down the street.

"They evidently don't intend to pay any more attention to me to-night, so I need not fear being shadowed," he mused.

"But I will keep my eyes open all the same," he added, as he sauntered leisurely up the street.

For a couple of blocks he proceeded, but, as far as he could see, there wasn't any one in the neighborhood who seemed to be paying any attention to him.

In order to "make assurance doubly sure" though at the next corner he boarded a car which came along at that moment; the vehicle was going up-town at a brisk pace, being behind time.

And as the creole got on the vehicle he took particular care to notice whether anybody else followed his example, turning his attention mainly to the front platform, for he considered it likely a spy would take up his quarters there if one was on his track.

But no one got on board, nor was there any one hurrying along on the sidewalk, trying to keep up with the car.

"It is all right," the creole muttered. "The pair of rascals haven't any suspicion that I am anything different from what I represent myself to be."

"They have set me down as likely to turn out to be a pigeon worth the plucking, and when I am suddenly transformed into a hawk, with both talons and beak, their disgust will be great."

"It was a bold move to face Trevanion, but I had confidence in my disguise, and so I resolved to risk it."

"I could see that he was puzzled, for although my disguise was perfect, and I flatter myself that I played my part well, yet there was something about me which perplexed him."

"He knew he had seen me before, and yet was not able to recall any of the circumstances and it was no wonder he couldn't account for it."

By this time the car came to the cross street where Joe Phenix had taken apartments, and the young man got off.

And although he felt almost certain he was not being shadowed, yet he still kept a watchful eye upon his surroundings.

It would be an extra skillful shadower, indeed, who could have succeeded in tracking this cautious young man.

Joe Phenix was in his apartment and answered the creole's knock at the door.

"I was rather in doubt as to whether I should find you here or not," the young man remarked, as he took a chair in obedience to a wave from the detective's hand.

"Oh, yes; about all I can do at present is to sit here, like an overgrown spider in the center of his web, waiting for the flies to become entangled."

"Well, I think I have made considerable progress to-night in getting some flies in such a position that they will soon be in trouble," Gontier remarked.

"That is good!" Joe Phenix declared. "I am glad you are able to make so flattering a report."

"In the first place I called upon the minister," and then he related at length all the particulars of the interview.

The detective listened attentively, and did not speak until the young man came to the end.

"It is very strange how things sometimes turn out in this world," he observed.

"And it was a very fortunate circumstance that I concluded to send you to see the gentleman, instead of going myself, as I originally intended."

"It was my intention to attend to the matter in person, but I would not have been able to discover a clew to the mystery as you have done."

"I am not mistaken, I think, when I assume that you are acquainted with all the particulars concerning this girl, whom this pair of rascals have put the dead Constance forward to represent?"

"You are right; I know all about the matter, and so was immediately able to detect the trick the schemers were trying to play."

"Then, too, I know the history of Constance, so, even if I had not been as well-posted about the real daughter of the minister as I am, I could have instantly told him that the English girl could not possibly have been his child."

"But here is a point upon which no light has been shed," the detective remarked in his calm, judicial way.

"How in the name of all that is wonderful did this Englishman obtain his knowledge of the minister's early life?"

"That is a mystery, unless the account given by Trevanion concerning the source of his information is correct."

"I do not place any reliance upon that statement," Joe Phenix remarked.

"From my experience with the class of rascals to which Trevanion belongs, I am satisfied that in a majority of cases they would rather tell a lie than speak the truth, even when they cannot hope to gain anything by so doing."

"Then it is natural, too, for a man engaged in a scheme of this kind to try to cover up his tracks all he can."

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly, for he would be apt to reason that the minister might not be willing to yield tamely to be blackmailed, and in case he showed fight, and engaged detectives to help him in the struggle, it will be important for the schemers to arrange matters so the bloodhounds would have as few clews as possible to work upon."

"Yes, that is the idea, and as he has so cleverly arranged the matter that we have no facts to build upon, we must fall back upon surmise."

"Now, then, to my thinking, there are only two people who could possibly have put Trevanion in possession of the perfectly accurate information which he has of the secret early life of the minister."

"The brother or sister?"

"Exactly; either the one or the other."

"I do not think it could possibly be the woman," the creole declared. "And I will tell you why. I do not believe she is living."

"I saw her about sixteen years ago. I was then a little over six years old, and she was a perfect wreck—a regular New York 'rounder,' who spent the greater part of her time in the workhouse on Blackwell's Island, sent up for intoxication."

"This fact I discovered some twelve years later, for shortly after I saw the unfortunate woman, my people went West, and I remained there until I was eighteen years of age, then business brought me to New York, and one of the first things I did was to set on foot inquiries, in order to ascertain what had become of the wretched creature, but was not able to gain any trace of her."

"As nearly as I could discover no one had seen anything of her for four or five years."

"I had no difficulty in finding policemen and saloon-keepers in the Water street dive district, who were acquainted with her, but none of them knew what had become of the woman."

"As one policeman said, when a miserable wretch of that kind drops out of the ranks, no one takes the trouble to inquire what has become of her; there are no anxious friends to visit the morgue, eager to see if they can recognize the absent one in the person of some unfortunate unknown, picked up dead in the streets, or taken from the dark waters which roll so incessantly around the great city."

"These homeless, friendless ones merely drop out of sight, and no one cares to trouble themselves to inquire what has become of them."

"There is very little doubt, then, that the woman is dead," the detective remarked.

"Yes, it is not possible, under the circumstances, to come to any other opinion," the young man declared.

"The information must have come from the brother then," Joe Phenix observed.

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"Still, when you come to reflect carefully upon all the circumstances in the case, it will be seen that, really, it does not make any difference how the schemers got their information."

"They are in possession of it, and that is what we must recognize and work on."

"Now then, to come right down to the facts, I surmise that the case runs this way:

"By some accident Trevanion and this Captain Murphy learned the particulars concerning the early life of the minister. I will assume that the information came from the brother,

who is, probably, a wretched sot, not much better than the unfortunate woman who has so absolutely sunk out of sight.

"The brother saw the minister, recognized him, and it was an easy matter to discover how it was that he now bore another name, for his record is open to the world, as far as that goes.

"Then he came in contact with the schemers, happened to tell them something about the matter, probably was under the influence of liquor at the time, and they saw at once there was a chance to make some money if the affair was managed skillfully.

"In order to make an impression upon the minister it might be necessary to bring forward the daughter, and then the brother told of the curious malformation of the little toe; by means of which the child could be identified.

"Trevanion was at once struck by the intelligence, for his reputed wife, Constance Blakeley, was marked in a similar manner.

"He and Constance had separated. I have caused a searching investigation to be made into the circumstances, and have discovered that they quarreled in the most violent manner.

"He attempted to beat her in Chicago, and she, in her desperation, drew a dagger, and, undoubtedly, would have done her best to kill him, if the people who had been attracted by the noise had not seized her.

"Owing to this circumstance he hated the woman, and so he and his companion formed the plan of luring Constance to the East, expressly to be put out of the way, for they knew they could not hope to induce her to aid them in this scheme of putting her forward as the daughter of the minister, for the girl was no crook, and would not have consented to play such a part.

"The Dangerous Blacksmith did the killing, and the way the job was performed is easily got at.

"If you remember, one of the strange mysteries of the Tarrytown case was, that no one saw the girl in the town, or neighborhood, prior to the discovery of the body."

"Yes, I recollect, and it was very strange too, for some one ought to have seen her."

"No, for she never was in Tarrytown while she was alive.

"The career of the Dangerous Blacksmith gives me a clue as to how the scheme was worked.

"A few years ago there were a great many robberies committed in the towns along the Hudson River, and the crooks managed their game so well that it did not seem to be possible to get any trace of them after the robberies were committed. It was really very mysterious, for the scamps left no more trace after them than if they had sunk into the earth or flown up through the air.

"I was employed on the case, and after a careful search, I made the discovery that a little black sloop, with three men on board, had been cruising up and down the river, and after I learned this it did not take me long to connect the boat with the crimes.

"The Dangerous Blacksmith was one of the three men, but as the district attorney did not think I had secured evidence enough to convict him, the case never came to trial, the indictment being pigeon-holed, and the fellow released on bail, with a warning that he had better be careful how he behaved himself in the future.

"There was a little bit of politics in this," the detective explained, with a sarcastic smile.

"It was just before election, and if the Dangerous Blacksmith had not been an extra good ward 'heeler' I doubt if he would have been released.

"Well, in this case the ruffian went back to his old game.

"Constance was decoyed on board of a boat, and, under cover of the night, taken to Tarrytown and there drugged and drowned.

"If she was chloroformed into insensibility, and then plunged into the water until life was extinct, the probabilities are that all traces of the drug would have passed away before the doctors made their examination, and so they, naturally, would return a verdict that the girl came to her death by drowning, without having any suspicion that there had been any foul play in the matter."

"Yes, you have undoubtedly hit on the truth.

"The body was placed on the rocks at high tide, and arranged so it could not float off, in order it should be discovered in the morning.

"Then, Trevanion happened to, accidentally, come to Tarrytown, identified the body, and thus made the way open to bleed the minister."

"But, thanks to you having taken an interest in the matter the game will not be successful."

"It looks that way just now," Joe Phenix remarked with a good deal of quiet satisfaction visible in his tone.

"Of course the rascals may be extra smart, or I blunder in some way, so I cannot catch them, but at present it appears as if I stood a good chance to nail the three!

"I have more information for you," the special observed.

"I tried a bold stroke to-night and I am pleased to say it proved to be a decided success."

And the story of the encounter with Trevanion and Captain Murphy was given.

"You are right—that was a bold stroke!" Joe Phenix declared in admiring tones, when the recital was finished.

"Well, I had confidence in my disguise, and thought if I could get on intimate terms with these two rascals I could score a point."

"Oh, yes, that is the truth, undoubtedly."

"You can easily see that they have made up their mind to make a victim out of me."

"That is the game."

"And when the captain, in so friendly a manner, proposed to accompany me to Wall street to-morrow, I immediately jumped to the conclusion he had some little game in his mind which he proposed to work."

"Oh, yes, not much doubt about that."

"I am a little in the dark as to the precise nature of the game."

"They mean to rob you in some way of the money which you are going to draw from your bankers, between Wall street and the hotel."

"I suppose that is the scheme, but how will they work it?"

"That is a hard question to answer," the detective said with a smile.

"The captain's suggestion in regard to a game of billiards, or a little fun at cards, to-night, was with the idea of winning money from me."

"Oh, yes, they are a couple of sharks; that is the way they make their living, and when you mentioned that you had over four thousand dollars in cash at your disposal, I don't doubt you made their mouths water."

"And if they saw me get the money in my possession, the pair would be apt to strain every nerve to get possession of it."

"We must give them a chance," Joe Phenix observed, quietly.

"Eh?"

"You must go down to Wall street and draw the four thousand odd, to-morrow."

"You will arrange the matter?"

"Yes; you must be slow in getting downtown, so as not to arrive before half-past ten, and then when you present yourself at the banking-house of Brown Brothers, and disclose your identity, you will find them ready to pay over the money."

"But I ought to have a draft to present."

"That matter can be arranged without any trouble," the detective replied, after a moment's thought.

"When you announce who you are, you can take your wallet, as if you were about to produce the draft, then you will be invited into an inner apartment, in order to see one of the heads of the firm, and when you come out you will have the money in your hand."

"Ah, yes, I see; that is for the purpose of leading the rascals on."

"Exactly! Then you will start for the hotel, and if on the way they suggest anything, be sure to comply with their wishes."

"You will take measures to entrap them if they try to work any game?"

"Yes, and I shall try my best to catch them, red-handed, in the very act."

"That will be a surprise-party, indeed!" the creole exclaimed.

"I must admit that it would give me a great deal of pleasure to catch such expert scoundrels," the detective declared.

"I consider that these two are foemen worthy of my steel."

"There is a vast amount of satisfaction in getting the best of these first-class scoundrels," Joe Phenix continued.

"It is no triumph to trap your common rascal who walks blunderingly into the net, but when it comes to the A No. 1 scamps, the men of brains, when a fellow of that sort is captured the man who does the work can congratulate himself."

"You think then that the time has come for a forward movement?"

"Yes, I do not see how we can gain anything by waiting," Joe Phenix responded, in a reflective way.

"The men have fully developed their game, and I do not think they will be apt to make any move which will give me any better chance at them than I have at present."

"The girl is dead, murdered by the Dangerous Blacksmith, I think," the detective continued.

"They have made their demand to Mr. L. count, and, perhaps, we might score another point by allowing them to go on and produce the woman, who is to testify in regard to the child, so we could get at her, and find out what kind of a character she is, but if we wait to do that we will lose the chance to nip our birds to-morrow, and, to my thinking, we would lose more than we would gain."

"Yes, I think your conclusion is a just one," the other remarked, thoughtfully.

"These fellows are going to try some game on you to-morrow," Joe Phenix remarked.

"There is no doubt about it, for forty-five hundred dollars is a big sum for a pair of crooks to win in one stake, and they will make a desperate effort to secure it. I, also, will make an equally strenuous attempt to catch them, red-handed, in the very act of securing the money so as to land them in jail."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"The charge will be a trivial one, of course, to

bring against such first class rascals, but it will answer to keep them safe under lock and key, so as to give me time to work up the rest of the business."

"I will do my best to play my part to perfection," the creole declared.

"Oh, I haven't any fear but what you will get along all right," the detective affirmed.

"If I could always depend upon my Specials doing their work as well as you do yours, I should be perfectly satisfied."

"I am very much obliged to you for the compliment," the other observed, smiling with pleasure.

"Nay, it is not a compliment, it is the truth," the great detective declared.

"Now as this is an important matter I shall look after it myself," Joe Phenix continued.

"I regard it as most essential that this pair be captured right in the act of robbing you."

"Of course, it is not possible for me to tell exactly what kind of a game they will play, but I assume from the fact that they are obliged to work the trick, so as to get at the money, between Wall street and the hotel, that they will try some bold stroke."

"They can hardly expect to persuade me to play cards, so as to give them a chance to win the money, at that hour in the morning," the young man suggested.

"Oh no, they are too skillful rogues to make a mistake of that kind," the detective declared in a positive way.

"It will be their game, I think, to try some bunco business on you," he continued.

"They will attempt to get you to go to some quiet place, and if they can't induce you to join in a game of chance, the pretended lottery swindle, or something of that sort, they will have their ruffians to attack you and take the money away by main force."

"If there are not too many of the fellows, and they do not have the luck to lay me out at the first clip, I think I will be apt to astonish the weak nerves of some of them!" the other declared with a laugh.

"I know that is not an idle boast, for with your strength, quickness and wonderful skill as a boxer, you are easily a match for three or four ordinary toughs," the detective replied.

"And if any game of that kind is attempted—and I don't really see under the circumstances what other trick they can work—you must do the best you can to stand them off until I can come to your assistance."

"You can depend upon it that I will not be far away."

"Oh, yes, I understand that, and I am not at all afraid to walk into the trap," the creole replied in a confident manner.

"There is one thing in this case which favors us greatly," the detective remarked. "For the rascals are hampered by the fact that it would be very bad policy for them to take any part which would lead you to suspect they are in with the gang."

"They must not be mixed up with any crooked business just at present, for if they got into any trouble with the police it would give the minister an advantage which, under the circumstances, he might be quick to improve, so they must be careful how they work to get your money for fear of losing the big stake."

"Yes, and so the game is rendered much more difficult," the young man remarked.

"That is the way it looks to me. The moment I come into the matter I shall nail the two, even if they are playing the part of innocent spectators, no matter how much they may protest against it."

"It is necessary in a case of this kind to stretch the law a little sometimes," the detective added.

"If it was not done, cunning high-grade rascals, like these two fellows, would often succeed in escaping all punishment."

"Yes; and in order to make the thing complete I shall take the old indictment out of its pigeon-hole, and on the strength of it have the Dangerous Blacksmith arrested to-morrow."

"The way is clear now for me to do this without any trouble," the detective explained. "For the district attorney, who protected the scoundrel, weakly yielding to the importunities of some of these miserable ward politicians who are such a curse to the metropolis, is no longer in office, and the man who now holds the position is a bitter foe to the gang who interfered in behalf of the Dangerous Blacksmith."

"When thieves fall out honest men get their dues," the other remarked, with a smile.

"An old saying and a very true one," Joe Phenix coincided.

"When the two principals are safe behind the bars we will turn their apartments here into a rat-trap."

"That is, the police will take possession, admit all who come, but not permit any one to leave until they have given a full account of themselves, and so if there are any other rascals concerned in this game we stand a good chance to catch them."

The creole expressed his opinion that this was an excellent idea and then took his departure.

The veteran detective contemplated the situation with a deal of satisfaction.

"I think I will nail them!" he declared.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

AT exactly half-past nine o'clock on the morning which followed the night on which occurred the events described in our last chapter, Trevanion and Captain Murphy made their appearance in the office of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Gontier was seated near the door, reading a newspaper, which he laid aside upon seeing the two, rising and greeting them in the most cordial manner.

"We are here in time, as you see, my dear fellow," the captain remarked, in a genial way.

"As I told you last night, we are not going to let you face the dangers of Wall street alone," he continued. "Trevanion, and your humble servant, will escort you and see that you do not come to any harm."

"You are very kind, indeed!" the creole replied.

"Not at all, my dear fellow!" the captain declared.

"Trevanion and I haven't anything in particular to do this morning, and a trip to the dens of the money-changers will amuse us, eh, Trevanion?"

"Oh, yes; I have not been down there for an age," the Englishman observed.

"I usually get some obliging saloon-keeper to cash my drafts from home, so I am not put to the trouble of going down-town."

"Well, since these deuced land troubles began in Ireland, where my estates lie, I am not greatly bothered by having to cash foreign drafts, for my tenants are remarkably 'backward in coming forward,' and if my agent gets enough to pay the taxes, and keep the property from going to the dogs, I am very well satisfied."

"In fact, if it wasn't for my investments in this country, I should be in a bad way," the captain said.

"Ah, yes, I comprehend," Gontier remarked, listening with, apparently, a great deal of interest to the speech.

Trevanion had been intently studying the face of the creole, and there was an expression upon his features, despite the care which he took to always conceal his feelings under the mask of indifference—which seemed to say he did not know exactly what to make of the stranger.

"But these little things will happen, you know," the captain continued.

"I might follow the example of some of the other landlords and put the poor devils out on the roadside when they do not pay, but as I am an Irishman myself I can not find it in my heart to be hard with my own countrymen, even though Paddy holds back the rent."

"Yes, I understand how you feel about the matter," Gontier observed.

"By the way, have you gentlemen breakfasted?" he asked. "I hav'n't, and I hope you will join me."

"Well, as a rule, neither Trevanion or myself eat much of anything in the morning, and though we have had a slight snack, we don't mind tempting our appetites again. Eh, Trevanion?"

"I hav'n't any objection," the Englishman replied, still keeping a stealthy watch on the face of the creole.

So the three went in to breakfast together, and in this way a good half an hour was taken up.

Then the trio started for Wall street.

Sheeney Sal was on the watch, on the other side of the street, so as to be posted in regard to the looks of the destined victim.

And she took the next car for down-town.

Neither Phenix nor any of his men were in the neighborhood of the hotel, but when the three entered the banking-house, the veteran detective, and his assistant, Tony Western, were near at hand.

The three had come down the street abreast, but when they arrived in front of the banking-house, a knot of people were in the way, so they were obliged to separate.

Gontier went up the steps in advance, while the captain and Trevanion came on after him, side by side.

All the morning the Englishman had been singularly silent; the fact was, the face of the young man had produced a great impression upon him.

Trevanion had never been noted for his courage, and now at the last moment his heart failed him.

"I say, Murphy, I am deucedly afraid that we are in for a bad bit of business here!" he exclaimed, hurriedly, in the ear of the Irishman.

"I can't get the idea out of my mind that this man will be apt to prove an awful ugly customer, if we attempt to play any game upon him."

"Hav'n't we better let the thing go?"

"What is the matter with you? Has your heart gone down into your boots?" the captain replied, contemptuously, and speaking in the same cautious and rapid manner that the other employed.

"I have a presentiment that if we try to work this game we will get into trouble!" Trevanion asserted. "This man's face worries me!"

"Nonsense! It is too late to back out now; besides, we are not going to do any of the work,

and it is perfectly absurd to suppose that we can get into any trouble."

By this time the three were in the office and so an end was put to the discussion.

The young man introduced himself, and the clerk received him in a courteous manner.

"Ah, yes, we received word from our house in Chicago, in regard to your matter and we are pleased to see you."

"If you will have the kindness to step into the rear office I will introduce you to one of our principals, and he will attend to your business."

"I will be very much obliged," the creole said, with a polite bow, then he followed the gentleman into one of the rear offices, leaving Trevanion and the captain in the outer one.

"You see, my dear fellow, everything is all right," the captain remarked.

"I was a little afraid that the thing was too good to go through all right, but you can see now there isn't any 'stall' about the matter."

"He is going in to get his forty-five hundred beyond a doubt and, unless a miracle is worked in his behalf, in about ten minutes Sheeney Sal will have the 'leather' with the cash in her possession."

"Well, everything certainly does look to be all right, but notwithstanding that I have a dread of danger threatening," Trevanion observed, moodily.

"And all because there is something about the man's face that you don't like," the captain replied in a contemptuous manner.

"Well, old fellow, I would not have believed that you could be so chicken-hearted!"

"You would be a nice sort of a pal for a man to have in a dangerous enterprise!"

"That is all right, but that is just the kind of game I don't intend to play," Trevanion replied in a nervous way.

"Men can go in for that sort of thing, if they want to, but my rule is always to play a safe game, and never to run any big risks."

"Nothing venture, nothing win!" the Irishman exclaimed in a light and airy way.

"That may be true, but I don't go on that tack at all. And I can tell you, right now, Murphy, that if I had this big scheme presented to me again, I wouldn't go into it," he declared.

"I yielded to your persuasions, and then, too, I stood in fear of the woman and wanted to get rid of her. She had managed to find out about what kind of a man I was, and threatened to denounce me if I did not pay her hush-money."

"And that threat led her to her doom; she came here to New York after money, with which to purchase life, and met death instead," the captain remarked, with a grim smile.

"Apparently, everything is all right, but I am very uneasy."

"Ah, your liver is out of order!" the Irishman remarked in a jocose way.

"What you need now is a few good, strong doses of B. and S. Brandy and soda will put some Dutch courage into you; strengthen your backbone up a little, you know!"

The appearance of the creole at this moment, with a good-sized "wad" of one hundred dollar bills in his hand, put an end to the conversation.

"It is all right! I have got the money, and now we will be off to the hotel," he announced.

And then in a careless way he made the bills into a roll, put a rubber band around them, and slipped the precious parcel into his left hand pocket.

The captain exchanged a significant smile with the Englishman as he witnessed this proceeding.

If the sharper had had the placing of the money, so as to put it in readiness for Sheeney Sal's deft fingers, he could not have selected a more convenient place.

The three proceeded to the street, and at the corner of Broadway the captain began to play the game of the friend who wanted him to call.

"It must be about here somewhere," he said as the trio walked up Broadway.

Then the Irishman pretended to spy the number.

It was an old-fashioned house with a narrow entrance.

Sheeney Sal was in waiting—there was a collision in the entry.

Apologies on both sides, and when the woman got clear of the three, she had the roll of bills; but before she could conceal it on her person, Joe Phenix, who had entered right behind the party, grasped her by the wrist and snatched the roll out of her hand.

"Put the bracelets on the men!" he cried, as with a dexterous motion he snapped the handcuffs on the astonished woman.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MASK FALLS.

THE command was addressed to Tony Western, who was at the detective's heels.

He immediately sprang upon the captain; during the passing of the apologies, the Irishman and Trevanion had changed places, the captain

was nearest to the door and the Englishman beyond the creole in the entry.

The moment the command was given, Trevanion comprehended that his apprehensions had come true and the police were on them.

Panic-stricken he attempted to make a rush for the street, but the creole had his eyes on him, and the moment the attempt was made he caught Trevanion by the collar and hauled him backward into the entry.

The Englishman had become utterly desperate under the impulse of fear.

"Let me pass, or I will murder you!" he fairly shrieked, thrusting his hand behind him as if to grasp a weapon.

But he had no chance to get his revolver out, for the moment the threat was made the creole sprang forward and, with a terrific right-hand, between the eyes, knocked the Englishman backward against the stairs, half-stunned, and then before he recovered from the shock, Tony Western, having manacled the captain, who was by far too old, and too skillful a hand, to attempt to make any resistance, had the handcuffs upon the Englishman's wrists.

"Trevanion, for heaven's sake, man, what are you about?" the captain shouted as the Englishman made his mad attempt to escape.

"These gentlemen are officers and you are crazy to resist them!"

The Irishman was prompt to take advantage of every opportunity.

"My friend has completely lost his head, and you must really excuse him," he continued.

"Of course, I understand that this is all a ridiculous mistake, and when you come to know the rights of it you will make the amende honorable, and until that time I am quite content to be patient."

"Gammon!" remarked Joe Phenix, with such a peculiar emphasis on the single word, that the captain had a strong desire to murder the speaker on the spot.

The veteran detective had a hack in waiting, and into it the prisoners were put.

The three were crowded together on the back seat while Joe Phenix and the creole occupied the front one, Tony Western being on the box with the driver.

"To Police Headquarters!" said Joe Phenix to the driver, pretending to give directions.

A shade passed over the faces of the two men, and it was in order to get them to talk that the order was given.

"What is the idea of that?" the captain remarked in a very innocent way.

"Why do you not take us at once before a magistrate, so that this gentleman and myself will be able to show who we are? and, my dear Gontier, although you did attack poor Trevanion here so fiercely, you surely cannot believe that gentlemen of our standing would attempt to injure you in any way?"

"I presume that when our English friend here made his mad rush, you had an idea your life was in danger, and, under the circumstances, I do not wonder at your action. I should in all probability have done the same myself."

"I am taking you to Police Headquarters, so the chief will have a chance to examine you in regard to this Tarrytown business," Joe Phenix remarked.

By this time the two scoundrels were thoroughly on their guard, and a look of surprise appeared on their faces, but in spite of all their self-control, there was an anxious expression in their eyes.

The face of the woman wore a look of genuine amazement, for she knew enough in regard to the crime to understand how dangerous was the position the others occupied.

"Really, you will have to excuse me for saying it, but you are speaking in riddles," the captain remarked in an icy, contemptuous tone.

"What have we to do with any Tarrytown business?"

"Bluff is often a good game, but it will not save you this time," the man-hunter replied.

"The game that you two got up was as good a one as I ever got onto, but, thanks to a lucky chain of circumstances, I am in possession of all the facts of the case."

"You, Trevanion, lured your supposed wife, this Constance Blakeley, from Chicago to New York for the express purpose of putting her out of the way."

"The Dangerous Blacksmith did the job, and we have got hold of the boat which was used, and by this time the Blacksmith has been put through a course of sprouts by the chief of police, for he was arrested at ten o'clock."

"The object of the murder was so you could blackmail the minister, Lecount, by pretending you were the husband of his long lost daughter, but Constance was not the child, and you know it."

"Your first wife, Mignon Lawrence is the minister's daughter."

"You devil!" the Englishman hissed, glaring in the face of the creole. "You have hunted me down and got your revenge at last!"

"Oh, what a blind fool I was not to recognize you!"

"But you know me now, eh?" the young actress exclaimed, for it was indeed Mignon Lawrence masquerading in men's clothes.

"You recognize the fist, I suppose, even if my face did deceive you, you miserable wretch!" The Irishman was so completely astounded by this revelation that for a moment he forgot his caution.

"Tare and ounds!" he cried, in his excitement dropping into the brogue. "You don't mean to say this is all an illigant trap, and we have been done by a woman dressed up like a man?"

"You most certainly have," the detective replied.

"Well, sir, all I have to say is that this bangs Bannagher!" the Irishman declared.

"Yes, I think you are about right; before you get through I fancy you will discover you will have to pay dearly for the job.

"By this time the captain had "pulled himself together," as the saying is.

"My dear sir, I don't know who you are—I have never had the pleasure of being introduced to you—but I am satisfied from this specimen of your abilities in the detective line, that you are, what your countrymen call, a corker, but, clever as you are, you must undoubtedly understand that to surmise a thing and prove it are two entirely different matters," he suggested with courtly politeness.

"In your own mind you have settled exactly how this job was done, but when you come into a court-room and endeavor to show a judge and jury how the trick was worked, you may discover that you have undertaken a pretty difficult matter.

"And as far as I am personally concerned," he continued with an airy, indifferent manner, "I defy you to connect me with this affair."

"Possibly you will change your opinion before you get through with the case," Joe Phenix rejoined in a tone which spoke volumes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

AT Police Headquarters the three prisoners were examined, one at a time, by the superintendent of police, prompted by Joe Phenix.

The woman was the first.

She admitted that she had picked the pocket of the supposed young man, and secured the roll of bills, which the detective had wrenched from her grasp.

"It is of no use for me to attempt to lie out of the thing, when a man like Joe Phenix catches me dead to rights," she remarked, with a smile at the great detective, whom she had recognized by this time.

The woman was a philosopher and believed in putting the best possible face on the matter.

"Well, you are in a hole, Sarah, this time, and no mistake," the superintendent observed.

"I know it, and as I am going to plead guilty, so as to give as little trouble as possible, I hope you will speak to the judge and get me off with a light sentence," she replied.

"You can get off scot-free if you will turn State's evidence and tell what you know about this Tarrytown affair," the chief said.

"I would jump at the chance in a minute if I knew anything about the matter—honor bright, now I would!" the woman declared.

"But I will give you my word as a lady that I do not know anything about it!"

"How comes it then that you called on the minister about the matter?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Oh, that was some of Dangerous's stupid work," was Sheeney Sal's reply.

"He got the idea we could make a stake by suggesting to the minister that we thought he had something to do with the Tarrytown business, but it did not amount to anything."

"But Dangerous was concerned in the matter?" the superintendent declared.

"See here, chief, it isn't the square thing, you know, to ask me to give my old man away," the woman protested.

"But really, though, I couldn't do it if I wanted to," she continued. "He and I don't live together, and he wouldn't trust me with any of his secrets. He came and got me to help him on the minister job, and that is all I know."

Both the men were satisfied from the way she spoke that she told the truth and so they did not press the subject.

"One of these men put you on to this pick-pocket lay though," the chief asserted.

"Oh, no, I got up the job myself," the woman replied, with a laugh, and then she added:

"Come now, chief, you know me of old, and you ought to know that I am not the one to peach on a pal.

"I did the trick alone, and that is all you will get out of me!"

The men did not attempt to talk more on this subject, for they knew she meant what she said, so she was sent down to a cell, and Captain Murphy brought up.

Not a thing though could the two keen ones do with the redoubtable captain.

He persisted that he knew nothing about the Tarrytown mystery. He had made Trevanion's acquaintance at a hotel, and thought him a nice fellow. In regard to the minister business, he and the Englishman had picked up a wretched man one night and carried him into Trevanion's apartments, and there he had told the story of the minister's life, suggesting that they could make a stake by blackmailing him.

This was the brother of the minister's wife—so he said. They got him into a hospital next day and in a week he was dead, and that was all he knew about the matter.

He was sent down and Trevanion ordered up, but the officer returned with the startling intelligence that the Englishman had committed suicide. The man lacked courage to face his peril.

"The deuce!" cried the chief. "And the Dangerous Blacksmith is gone too. He was killed by the officers this morning in resisting arrest."

And so in spite of Joe Phenix's skill the captain got off.

"I will have you yet though, unless you turn over a new leaf!" the veteran detective declared, grimly.

Mignon easily proved to Mr. Lecount that she was his child. Her mother had hunted her up when she was about six years old, and bestowed a ring on her which the minister had given to his young bride.

It was the mother's idea that, in the time to come, the child might seek its father and the ring would be a proof of her identity.

Safe then in a haven of refuge we leave our actress detective, the best Special, as he claims, that ever aided the veteran man-hunter.

THE END.

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